

# Comprehensive Special Education Program Review

Kick-off Meeting

Greenwich Public Schools

*October 21, 2020 | 7:00PM*

*Public Consulting Group*

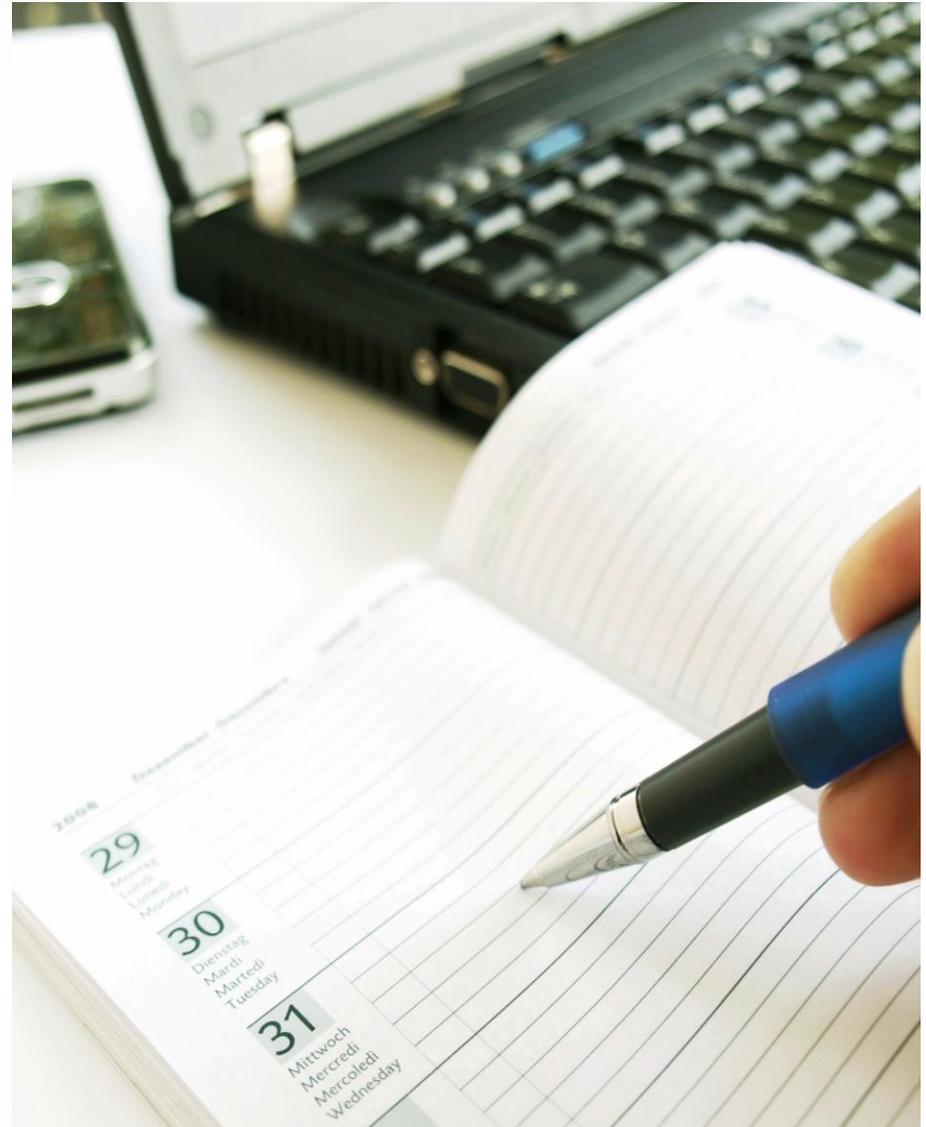
# Agenda

Introduction of Core Project Team

The PCG Difference

Project Approach

FAQ and GPS Questions



# **Introductions of Core Project Team**

# Introduction of Core Project Team

## Matthew Korobkin, MS.Ed., Project Director

**Background** – Former Special Education Officer for Strategic Planning and Evaluation, Office of the Secretary of Education, Delaware Department of Education; former special education teacher.

**Expertise** – Special Education strategic planning, policy creation, and implementation; organizational leadership and design; creation of accountability systems; stakeholder engagement.

**Project Roles** – Project oversight; Facilitation; Stakeholder outreach.



## Jennifer Meller, Ed.D., Associate Manager, Subject Matter Expert

**Background** – Former Special Education Operations Director, School District of Philadelphia. National lead for PCG's special education consulting services and Special Education Subject Matter Expert.

**Expertise** – Special Education policies and procedures, research design, business process mapping, facilitation, stakeholder engagement, data analysis and use, special education program evaluation.

**Project Roles** – Project oversight; Facilitation; Stakeholder outreach.



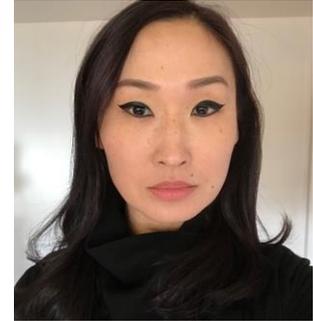
# Introduction of Core Project Team - continued

## Anna Nam, MS.Ed., Subject Matter Expert

**Background** – Former Associate at the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Office of Special Education Quality Assurance; former special education teacher.

**Expertise** – Special education program quality assurance; compliance, results driven accountability; special education instruction.

**Project Roles** – Project support, research, and data analysis for program reviews.



## Matthew Scott, M.Ed., Project Coordinator and Data Analyst

**Background** – Education management experience specializing in accreditation, strategic planning, program quality review, learning assessment processes, and education policy.

**Expertise** – Project management, data analysis, client engagement.

**Project Roles** – Project coordination, research, and data analysis for program reviews.



# Introduction of Core Project Team - continued

## Jerry Petroff, Ph.D., Project Advisor

**Background** – Professor and Executive Director at the Center on Sensory and Complex Needs, The College of New Jersey (TCNJ); former administrator at the New Jersey Department of Education.

**Expertise** – Virtual classroom observations, assessment and evaluation, data analysis, client engagement.

**Project Roles** – Advising on classroom observations.



## Sue Gamm, J.D., Project Advisor

**Background** – Former Chief Specialized Services Officer, Chicago Public Schools; Former District Director, US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights.

**Expertise** – Special education leadership and law; program and policy evaluation; civil rights.

**Project Roles** – Advising on special education legal matters and policies.



# Delivering Solutions that Matter

*Since 1986, we pride ourselves as being a leading public sector management consulting and operations improvement firm that partners with health, education, and human services agencies to improve lives*



- Our 3,000 staff are located throughout 55 offices across the United States and internationally with a local presence in Windsor, CT and Lower Manhattan, NY.
- PCG is accustomed to high-profile, high-impact projects where shoulder-to-shoulder partnership is essential.

# Regional Success Stories

## Student Success Initiatives

- **Connecticut Department of Education** – *ReadConn, a rigorous and engaging professional learning program for Connecticut teachers, special education teachers, school-based literacy leaders, and administrators*
- **New York State Education Department** – *EngageNY, curriculum developed by PCG*

## Targeted Program Reviews

- **Chappaqua Central School District (NY)** – *School counseling review*
- **New Paltz Central School District (NY)** – *School counseling review*

## Special Education Program and Process Reviews

- **Newark Public Schools (NJ)** – *Special education operations review*
- **Princeton Public Schools (NJ)** – *Comprehensive special education program review*
- **West Windsor Plainsboro Regional School District (NJ)** – *Comprehensive special education program review*
- **Northern Valley Regional High School District (NJ)** – *Comprehensive special education program review*
- **Sharon Public Schools (MA)** – *Comprehensive special education program review*
- **Massachusetts Department of Elem. & Sec. Edu.** – *Monitoring redesign*



# PCG's Program Review Fundamentals



**Extensive experience** conducting large-scale engagements focused on Student Outcomes, Special Education Process Reviews, Leadership Development, and Organizational Redesign and strong local and national special education policy and best practices **subject matter expertise**.



**Collaborative partnership** with GPS to design customized approaches that best meets the District's needs and provides answers to the essential questions.



**Data collection approaches** that succinctly capture, analyze, report and inform practice from a variety of perspectives.



**Transforming data** into a meaningful and easy to comprehend analysis, utilizing stakeholder input, and feedback and translating recommendations into **actionable steps for improvement**.



Adoption of **Project Management Fundamentals** to keep the project within scope and budget.

# Proposed Project Approach



**To PCG, a review is not just about identifying the challenges and offering recommendations - it's about creating an intentional, ambitious, and urgent path forward for the Greenwich community to improve the outcomes of students with disabilities.**

# A Collaborative Approach To Program Reviews



Our reviews are **collaborative** by design, and we work side-by-side with districts to help define the challenges, specify goals and develop effective, outcome-driven strategies.



We help you to answer **essential questions** about student progress and program effectiveness, pinpoint specific areas of strength, and identify improvement targets.



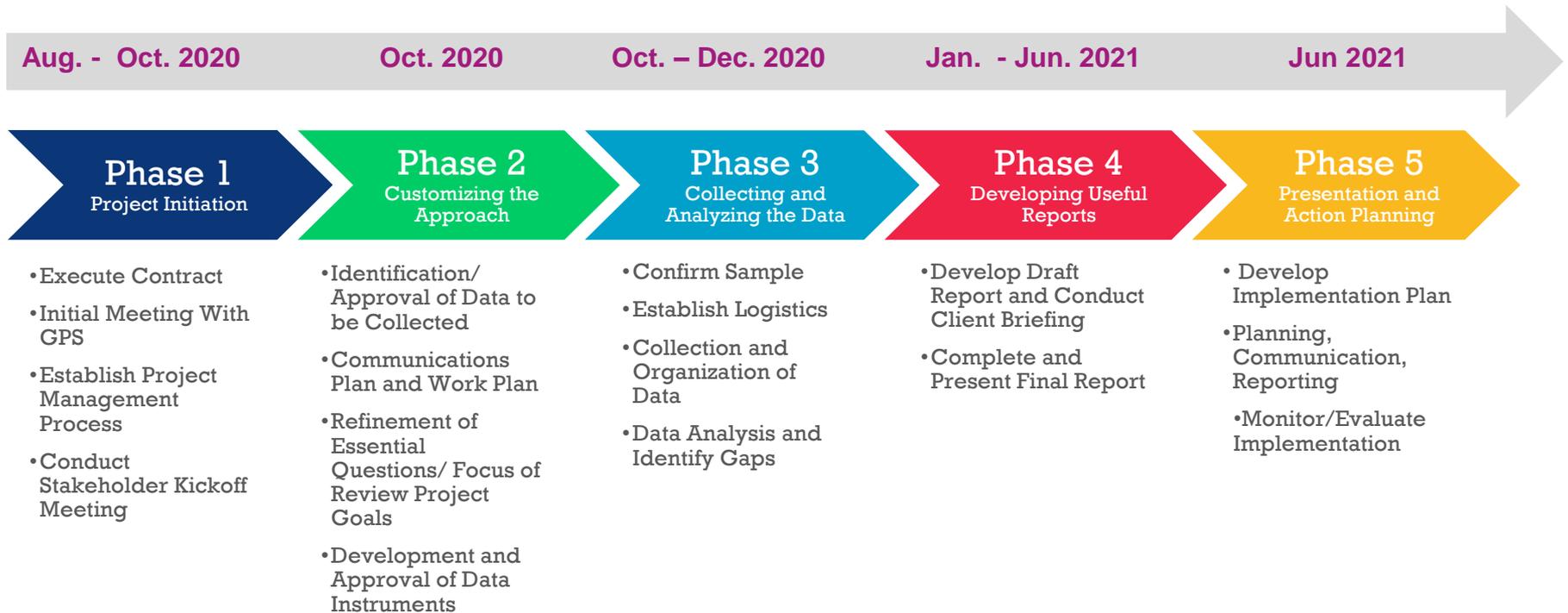
Our review approach is **multidimensional**, emphasizes the participation of multiple stakeholders, and includes both quantitative and qualitative data collection. It is grounded in our experience and research in best practices.



Our aim is to continue to strengthen district culture by leading the way with **accountable solutions** that support:

- Enhanced collaboration and stakeholder engagement
- Continuous improvement efforts in special education with measurable academic and functional outcomes and compliance
- Greater efficiencies

# Project Methodology



## Starting a Strong Foundation



Bring together key stakeholders during a project kickoff to further explore the expectations and visions for the review.



Present workplan for broader stakeholder input.



Finalize communication plan with GPS project team to manage all phases of the project.



Customize evaluation tools to meet the unique needs of GPS.

## Adopting Research Questions Consistent with RFP

*PCG understands GPS is seeking consulting services for a comprehensive program review of special education services. The comprehensive program review will include the following areas:*



The district's **continuum of services organized to support a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE)**, and the **meeting of compliance and data collection requirements**;



The **funds budgeted for special education the major cost drivers**; the **allocation resources** in a way that facilitates maximum return on District investment;



The manner by **which GPS organizes and utilizes its human capital resources** to provide adequate services for students with disabilities to support student learning outcomes;



The extent to which GPS's **instructional practices focus on improving academic, functional, and post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities** and employ **inclusive practices**; and



GPS' support of the unique learning needs of struggling students through its **tiered system of support**.

## Adopting Research Questions Consistent with RFP

### Guiding Questions

1. How is the district's **continuum of services organized to support a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE)**, and to what extent is GPS meeting **compliance and data collection requirements**?

### Corresponding GPS RFP Specifications

#### Referral Process and Data Collection

How is Greenwich Public Schools performing in meeting legal obligations and requirements?

- Referral practices (process and timelines)
- Eligibility practices
- Disability prevalence by grade
- English Language Learner identification process
- Systemic PPT process and training
- Guidelines and Handbooks to uphold fidelity of processes
- District Organizational Model
- State Complaint process, data collection and analysis
- Random IEP Audits (Achievement towards goals, appropriateness of goals)
- Independent Evaluation Requirements- how many, when do they occur in the process
- Exit Support and district follow-up for success

## Adopting Research Questions Consistent with RFP

### Guiding Questions

2. How are **funds budgeted**, and what are the major cost drivers? Does GPS **allocate resources** in a way that facilitates maximum return on District investment?

### Corresponding GPS RFP Specifications

#### Program Costs

In relation to like demographic and performance peer groups:

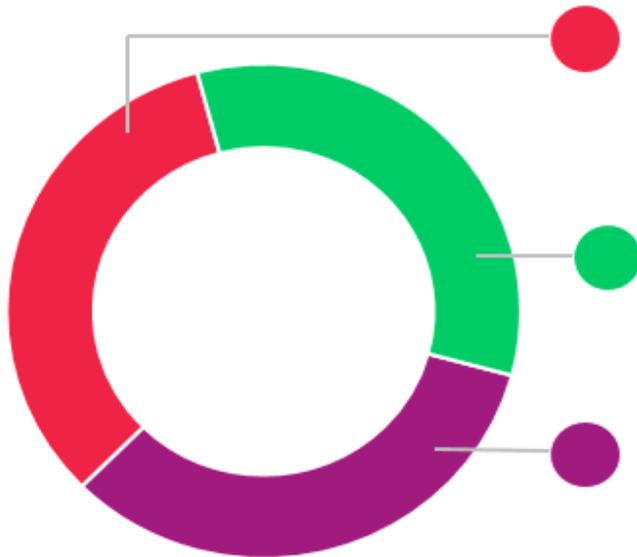
- Extended School Year
- Review of Settlements
- Review of Out of District Placements
- How does GPS benchmark against other high performing districts with a similar demographic in terms of special education delivery and costs? Most notably, removing teacher salary from the cost driver, and focusing more on staffing type and numbers of staff, materials, and supplies available for special education.

## Adopting Research Questions Consistent with RFP

Guiding Questions	Corresponding GPS RFP Specifications
<p>3. To what extent does GPS <b>organize and utilize its human capital resources</b> to provide adequate services for students with disabilities to support student learning outcomes?</p>	<p><u>Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizational model utilized to meet staffing needs</li> <li>Staffing review for PK, Elementary, Middle, High School, and Post-High School</li> </ul>
<p>4. To what extent does GPS's <b>instructional practices focus on improving academic, functional, and post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities</b> and employ <b>inclusive practices</b>?</p>	<p><u>Instructional Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systems of support: inclusion, pull-out, resource rooms.</li> <li>Teacher professional development for special educators, general educators, support staff, and administrators.</li> <li>Transitional programming for post-high school</li> <li>Preschool programming</li> <li>Out of district programs</li> </ul> <p><u>Performance of Students with Disabilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduation rates</li> <li>Dropout rates</li> <li>Student achievement on state and local assessments</li> </ul>
<p>5. How does GPS <b>support the unique learning needs of struggling students through its tiered system of support</b>?</p>	<p><u>Instructional Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unique programming for unique learning needs</li> <li>Behavioral supports</li> <li>Tiered System of Support (RtI)</li> </ul>

# Research Approach

PCG will partner with GPS to complete an independent, comprehensive review, including:



***Current State Analysis:*** Assess quality of GPS programs in order to recommend improvements

***Inventory of Promising Practices:*** Review and document promising practices employed in GPS and benchmarked against comparable school districts

***Stakeholder Outreach:*** Focus groups, interviews, and surveys with GPS staff and families

## Data Collection Methods

### **INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS (~ 4 days)\***

Focus groups to include principals, special educators, general educators, related service providers, school psychologists, instructional aides, families, and representatives from various departments.

### **STUDENT FILE REVIEW CASE STUDIES (~4 days)\***

Student-centered file review process; allows for rich conversation about school-based practices, review of a variety of student documents and enable the identification of special examples where documented procedures do not align to practice.

### **VIRTUAL CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS (~5 days)**

The goal of these observations is to document, for each student shadowed, the access that he/she has to high quality instruction, the fidelity of IEP implementation, the continuity of services, and overall experience as a student receiving special education services. PCG will leverage a virtual classroom observation tool it has created in tandem with Dr. Jerry Petroff of the College of New Jersey (TCNJ).

**\*Scope enhancements; increased number of days and PCG staff.**

## Data Collection Methods - continued

### **ELECTRONIC SURVEYS** (2 surveys)

Two surveys: (1) Parents/families, and (2) School-based Staff including Special Educators (teachers and related service providers), General Educators, School-based Administrators, and Division Administrators.

### **PEER DISTRICT INTERVIEWS** (5 districts)

Interviews with up to five districts to benchmark GPS against other high performing districts with a similar demographic in terms of special education delivery and costs.

### **DATA, POLICY, and PRACTICES REVIEW**

Review of written documentation, reports, and GPS-specific and publicly available data.

# Data Collection Mapping

<u>Areas of Review</u>	Data, Policy, & Practices Review	Surveys	Interviews, Focus Groups, inc. Peer Districts	Student File Review Focus Groups	Observations
1. How is the <b>district’s continuum of services organized to support a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE)</b> , and to what extent is GPS <b>meeting compliance and data collection requirements?</b>	X	X	X	X	X
2. How are funds budgeted, and what are the <b>major cost drivers?</b> Does GPS <b>allocate resources in a way that facilitates maximum return</b> on District investment?	X		X	X	



## Data Collection Mapping - continued

<u>Areas of Review</u>	Data, Policy, & Practices Review	Surveys	Interviews, Focus Groups, inc. Peer Districts	Student File Review Focus Groups	Observations
3. To what extent does GPS <b>organize and utilize its human capital resources</b> to provide adequate services for students with disabilities to support student learning outcomes?	X	X	X	X	X
4. To what extent does GPS's <b>instructional practices focus on improving academic, functional, and post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities</b> and employ <b>inclusive practices</b> ?		X	X	X	
5. How does GPS <b>support the unique learning needs of struggling students through its tiered system of support</b> ?	X	X	X	X	X



# Impact of COVID-19 on Instruction

- ❖ During focus groups and interviews, PCG will ask participants to reflect on instruction and District practices prior to the shift to virtual instruction in March 2020.
- ❖ Given the long-term disruption of COVID-19, it is important to acknowledge the instructional shift and address the impact on students with disabilities.
- ❖ PCG is working with the GPS project team to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on the District's ability to provide services and supports to students with disabilities and identify the best approach in discussing that impact in the report.



# COVID-19 Factor

- As we experience this unprecedented situation together, PCG is committed to working with GPS through this review process with flexibility and compassion.
- The impact of COVID-19 on school operations is profound and will likely change the nature of schools for years to come.
- Our data collection process will be designed to understand and document GPS special education practices:
  - 1) before the pandemic hit
  - 2) the lessons learned from virtual instruction in the spring of 2020, and
  - 3) the current state of service delivery in the 2020-21 school year.
- PCG has framed this proposal around the assumption that social distancing rules will still be in effect. All activities will be done virtually.



Phase 1  
Project Initiation

Phase 2  
Customizing the  
Approach

Phase 3  
Collecting and  
Analyzing the Data

Phase 4  
Developing Useful  
Reports



Draft Preliminary Report



Preliminary Report to include overall findings, strengths, and recommendations and inform improvement planning



Stakeholder review of Preliminary Report



Develop Executive Summary



Submit Final Report

Phase 1  
Project Initiation

Phase 2  
Customizing the  
Approach

Phase 3  
Collecting and  
Analyzing the Data

Phase 4  
Developing Useful  
Reports

Phase 5  
Presentations and  
Action Planning



Present Preliminary and Final Report to Board and Leadership Team



Facilitate Action Planning Sessions



Initiate Development of Implementation Plan

# What's Next?



PCG is excited to be leading this engagement and to serve as an independent reviewer of special education practices in GPS.



We have proven success effectively managing projects of this importance and magnitude and come to this project with established communication templates and data collection protocols.



PCG is committed to working with GPS to build a partnership and assist the organization with developing an aligned and integrated strategic vision.

# Frequently Asked Questions

# Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are you coming to my school?
2. How many people will be included in the focus groups and interviews?
3. Will the focus groups and interviews be confidential?
4. Will the final report be made public?
5. Will schools and individuals be named in the report?
6. Will the report include positives and areas in need of improvement?



# GPS Questions and Answers

# GPS Questions and Answers

## **Is this review being conducted independent from the Special Education Department?**

*This engagement is an independent, transparent, external review of GPS' special education program, internally being led by a GPS Steering Committee comprised of the Superintendent as well as parent and Board representation.*

## **Will PCG review prior GPS Special Education studies and key meetings on these studies?**

*Yes, PCG will review past district special education reports and key meetings related to these studies, including: Gold Report (1997), MGT Report (2005), Oswego Report (2010), Theresa C. DeFrancis Report (2014), Key2Ed (2019/2020), Board of Education Meetings (specifically June 2019, September 2019, February 2020) and the BET Public Hearing January 2020.*



# GPS Questions and Answers

## **Will PCG review GPS referral practices, processes, and special education timelines?**

*Yes, PCG will review documentation and dates of parent evaluation requests regarding timelines; compliance with state and federal timelines; RTI and its relationship to special education referrals; and staff training regarding Child Find. PCG will also leverage national data in its review of timelines. PCG will also review the consistency of special education operating practices across all schools within the district.*

## **Will PCG study the PPT processes and trainings?**

*Yes, PCG will review the processes of “Pre-PPT Meetings” and “IEP Boot Camp.” Furthermore, PCG will review the training for special education administrators regarding how they conduct PPT meetings. Additionally, PCG will review trainings around IEP timelines; compliance; Child-Find; parent communication; staff communication; the structure and timing of PPT meetings; and the scheduling of PPT meetings.*



# GPS Questions and Answers

## **Will PCG review special education settlements and out of district placements?**

*Yes, PCG will review patterns in the rationale for out of district placements. PCG will also review trends and practices around special education settlements.*

## **Will PCG review special education staffing?**

*Yes, PCG will review special education policies and procedures relating to staff. PCG will also examine the present management structure of the district's special education department; the annual review process for special education staff and administrators; and other special education staff and administration accountability measures.*



# GPS Questions and Answers

## How will PCG be reviewing IEPs?

*Over four days, PCG will conduct file review focus groups. This student-centered file review process will specifically examine student IEPs. These PCG facilitated focus groups comprised of PPT members will yield data on matters related to IEP creation and PPT based practices throughout GPS.*

## How will PCG be selecting the IEPs for its file review focus groups?

*Based on a review of GPS' entire IEP student population, PCG will request the redacted documents of a representative sampling of students with disabilities. This representative sampling will be based on the district's composition of students with disabilities by disability category, grade, race/ethnicity, gender, twice exceptional, and dually identified (English learner) status. GPS staff will not be selecting the IEPs for this review.*

## How will PCG avoid conflicts of interest during the selection of sampled IEPs?

*To avoid any potential conflicts of interest, the GPS Special Education Department will **not** be selecting or recommending the selection of any files for this review. PCG will be requesting specific IEPs by student ID number and a person determined by the Superintendent of Schools will be accessing the requested IEPs.*

# GPS Questions and Answers

**How are high school special education teachers supposed to manage a caseload of 35+ students without any para support or with any coverage for PPTs?**

*PCG will be studying the staffing of the special education department, including special education teachers and para educators, examining staff to student ratios. PCG looks forward to exploring this further during this review.*

**Has anyone given thought to having the budget split, one for the normal operating expenses and a second for paying out when we lose a lawsuit. I am concerned that the implications of paying out a lot of money for outsourced schooling due to litigious parents. Does that not impact the delivery of services that could possibly prevent such lawsuits. How do we maintain the staff we need since the budget is so clearly impacted by outsourcing?**

*PCG will be reviewing the special education budget and offering recommendations. PCG will also be reviewing costs related to special education litigation.*

*PCG is in the process of collecting data from the district on this matter and looks forward to studying this in greater detail and providing recommendations that may address this.*

*PCG will also be reviewing out of district placements for special education programs.*



# GPS Questions and Answers

**Hi. I am curious why you are not using teletherapy and/or tele-assessment to deliver speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, and/or behavioral and mental health services. Aside from expanding your own capacity and reducing your clinicians' caseloads, students respond favorably to the digital format of teletherapy, and both clinicians and students report that they are able to develop the same or closer relationships through a platform built for teletherapy (vs. a generic video conferencing platform such google or zoom).**

*PCG will be studying the ways by which GPS provides related services to students who receive them. During the review, PCG will be studying the ways by which GPS does (and/or does not) deliver related services to students with IEP.*

**Will eligibility criteria be reviewed as well as assessments to determine eligibility, specifically for an SLD, as it is necessary for RTI?**

*PCG will be reviewing eligibility practices and protocols in GPS. PCG will also be reviewing Rtl practices and protocols, as well as its role in pre-referral for special education.*



# GPS Questions and Answers

**Will the study also consider challenges with 504 accommodations? If not, can you conduct a similar review of how 504 accommodations and other non-special education interventions are provided in GPS?**

*PCG will be studying 504 as it relates to the number of students who concurrently have an IEP and 504 as well as students who had an IEP and now have a 504. This study, however, is not an in-depth review of 504 supports and services specifically.*

**Is it within best practices for a district to make financial deals with families and in exchange have the families sign contracts that they will not hold the district liable for any wrong doings?**

*PCG will be studying the practices and protocols of the GPS special education department. PCG is presently conducting a document and data review and will be examining its operating practices to provide actionable recommendations for the district.*

**There doesn't appear to be any program catering to the 2e cohort. They are lost in the system that is under-educating them because of they don't learn in the traditional way.**

*PCG will be studying the continuum of services offered to students with IEPs in the district, including services provided to twice exceptional students.*



# GPS Questions and Answers

**Is it fair that students with severe ADHD, which seems to be even worse during distance, be expected to maintain the same workload and deadlines given to students with the benefit of in-person learning?**

*PCG looks forward to learning more about students engaged in distance learning. Although we cannot speak to this specific case, we will be conducting interviews and focus groups to further study teaching and learning for students with IEPs.*

**What schools are the gold standard/benchmark that you will be comparing GPS to? The gold standard/benchmark schools should be all school in the world or at a minimum in the U.S. and should not be limited to just schools in CT.**

*PCG is in the process of identifying local, regional, and national districts for comparison.*

# GPS Questions and Answers

**What obligations do school staff have for identifying children with special needs? Parents often don't know what is "special needs" and what is just troublesome behavior. We were left on our own for YEARS before a family friend suggested our child might be autistic. He was, as diagnosed by several doctors. Still GPS wouldn't agree. Until we lawyered up. Ignore, then deny, then fight, and finally do what the law requires. That's how Special Education operates within the GPS.**

*PCG will be reviewing the identification practices of GPS, including its understanding of, and adherence to, Child Find.*





**Solutions that Matter**