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NORTHSHORE SCHOOL DISTRICT COMPREHENSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN: OVERVIEW



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COMPREHENSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN: OVERVIEW

In Northshore, we believe every student deserves to thrive in their neighborhood school where they receive the support they need, when they need it, surrounded by neighborhood peers and rooted in their community. Our multi-year work to bring services to our neighborhood schools reflects this belief and our deep commitment to inclusion and excellence for each and every student. This document serves as a high-level overview of the significant work we are currently planning to advance our goals.

Definition of Inclusion:

Educational inclusion is characterized as a sense of belonging in our school communities and applies broadly to each and every learner and all environments. Each student, family, and community possesses strengths and cultural knowledge that benefit their peers, educators, and schools. And, we recognize, advocate for, and support the racial, ethnic, cultural, disability/ability, gender, sexual orientation, economic and religious diversity in our district. Inclusive schools are dedicated to embracing these diversities and supporting the unique needs and attributes of each and every student, where students are valued as expert learners and can meaningfully participate in general education. Northshore is committed to increasing inclusionary practices as we work together to dismantle systems and structures of oppression and redesign an educational system that centers justice-driven, intersectional, community-based knowledge and practices.

Definition of Inclusionary Practice:

Northshore is committed to creating a safe, caring, and inclusive environment within our school district community. Inclusive practices are the actions we use to support this belief and may include: universal design for learning (UDL), multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), inclusive individual education programs (IEP) in which students participate in the process, culturally responsive and sustained teaching, inclusive master scheduling, flexible service delivery, co-teaching, co-planning, and co-assessing, and family and community engagement.

Key components of Inclusion in Northshore School District:

- All students should experience a sense of belonging in their general education classroom at their neighborhood school.
- The need to belong precedes the need to achieve and students learn best when they feel valued.
- All students are seen and valued as expert learners and contributing members of the school community.
- As educators we believe in the “Least Dangerous Assumption” theory that all students have different abilities and talents, and all students are capable of learning.
- Students and their families are key members of the IEP team.
- All students, which include students receiving special education services, have access to MTSS Tier 1. Any student in need of additional support has access to Tier 2 and 3 supports.
- Staff play a critical role in creating an inclusive learning environment where all students feel valued and have access points to meaningfully participate in general education, regardless of their abilities or background.
- Providing flexible services in general education settings is not more expensive. In fact, it enables schools to maximize resources to meet the needs of each and every student.

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Recommendations:

In order to achieve a school system where students receiving special education services can attend their neighborhood school and meaningfully participate in all aspects of school life the following adjustments need to be made:

Program Model:

Over the course of six years, we plan to shift from our current program models to a continuum of special education services that will be available at each of our schools for most service needs. Flexible service delivery moves away from assigning staff to specific special education programs (e.g., Learning Center, Mid-Level Blended, Sensory, Mid-Level, Aspire, and Functional Skills and Academics (FSA)) and instead allocates staff based on student needs across a continuum of services within each neighborhood school. Special education teachers, specialists, and support staff will work as integrated members of school-based teams, collaborating closely with general education teachers to provide services through co-teaching, push-in, pull-out, and/or small group instruction. This change would enable students to receive their support through a continuum of services within their neighborhood school. The benefit of a flexible service model is that it allows for greater adaptability in meeting the individual needs of students while leveraging the expertise of educators. During this transition, we will be looking to scale the services within our social/emotional program that serves students in Grade 1-5 with the goal that these services, in the future, can also be served at student's neighborhood schools. Additionally, we are exploring the possibility of introducing a new therapeutic behavior program as part of our new continuum of services. This would allow us to provide more in-district options for students who need intensive support, reducing the need for out-of-district placements.

Staffing:

The current program staffing model does not provide the flexibility needed to support a flexible service delivery model. The district will continue working on a plan to better match staffing with student needs. This includes reviewing current staffing levels, creating an effective way to balance caseloads and workloads, and expanding co-teaching opportunities. The goal is to ensure that students receive the services they need, while staff have the necessary staffing structures in place to effectively support all learners they serve.

Professional Development:

To support this new delivery of services, and create MTSS school-wide systems, staff will need ongoing training on MTSS, 10 dimensions of belonging, UDL, co-teaching and co-planning. All staff will need training regarding inclusive service delivery across all disability categories. Special education staff will also need additional training around writing inclusive IEPs and strength based evaluations. District and school leaders will need additional training on creating flexible scheduling and inclusive service delivery. The Special Education Advisory Team (SEAT) will provide annual recommendations for continued staff professional development.

Structures:

We intend to evaluate all school facilities to support access and inclusion for all students. Adjustments may need to be made to buildings to add items such as hoists, swings, changing tables, and any other needed adaptive equipment. Additionally, building leadership may need to repurpose some classrooms or flex areas to be used as flexible academic, sensory, and social emotional support spaces, aligning with the MTSS framework to provide tiered interventions that meet the diverse needs of all students..

Students, Families and Community Members:

As we plan to change how we serve our students, the district will implement a communication/engagement plan for all stakeholders. A community advisory committee structure representing the needs of students and families to support this work will be formed in the 2025-26 school year. Information will be provided about the participation process in October 2025. Feedback from students and parents will be shared with SEAT and the Special Education Department to inform the Comprehensive Special Education Plan implementation.

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Goals:

By the 2032-33 school year across all 13 federal special education eligibility categories and racial/ethnic groups:

- 95% or more of students with disabilities who are served on IEPs within K-12 will be educated in their neighborhood schools (currently at 89% based on fall 2024 data)
- 85% or more of students with disabilities who are served on IEPs within K-12 will be educated within general education classes for 80% or more of the school day (currently at 75% based on fall 2024 data)

Benefits: Inclusive education supports stronger academic and social outcomes for students with disabilities, especially when they are educated in their neighborhood schools alongside their peers. With the right support, students with extensive support needs often make greater progress in their academic and social learning within inclusive settings. Furthermore, inclusive settings positively impact students' post-secondary outcomes. At the same time, students without disabilities also benefit from gaining increased empathy, stronger collaboration skills, and a deeper understanding of diversity. Inclusion helps all students build meaningful relationships, fosters a sense of belonging, and creates a more inclusive and supportive school environment where every learner is valued.

Preschool-5th grade (P-5):

School Year	Technical Transformations (system change)	Technical Transformations (structures)	Adaptive Transformations (beliefs, skills, new learning)
2025-26	Special Education Teacher teams, may use DRAFT workload matrix (provide feedback to SEAT)	<p>The evaluation of all school facilities to support inclusion; in partnership with representatives from each school</p> <p>Partner with transportation regarding students served in neighborhood schools</p> <p>Create a Student and Family Community Advisory Committee</p> <p>SEAT: (1) review current supplemental curriculum and determine need and (2) build 2-way communication process for feedback regarding professional development needs</p>	<p>Staff: (Tier 1): PBIS, UDL and Environmental Design</p> <p>REJ Throughline Two: Identity-Affirming Environments And Experiences</p>
2026-27	*Potentially move K-2 classroom out of programs (if there is a cohort of neighborhood students)	<p>Facilities upgrades</p> <p>Partner with transportation regarding students served in neighborhood schools</p> <p>SEAT: pilot curriculum if needed and follow CMAC process</p>	<p>Staff: (Tier 1) access to core instruction with accommodations/modifications and writing inclusive IEP's</p> <p>REJ Throughline Three: Student and Family Co-Design</p>

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2027-28	*Potentially move K-2 classroom out of programs (if there is a cohort of neighborhood students) Add therapeutic behavior program within district	Facilities upgrades Partner with transportation regarding students served in neighborhood schools	Staff: (Tier 2 and 3) small group instruction and progress monitoring
2028-29	All Kindergarten students are promoted to neighborhood schools. Transition 1 st and 2 nd graders to neighborhood schools (except Social/Emotional program) 3 rd -5 th graders age out of programs		TBD
2029-30	4 th -5 th graders age out of program		TBD
2031-32	5 th graders age out of program		TBD

*Individual Schools will determine readiness and partner with district for an earlier transition of students

Secondary:

School Year	Technical Transformations (system change)	Technical Transformations (structures)	Adaptive Transformations (beliefs, skills, new learning)
2025-26	Special Education Teachers teams may use DRAFT workload matrix (provide feedback to SEAT)	The evaluation of all school facilities to support inclusion; in partnership with representatives from each school Partner with transportation regarding students served in neighborhood schools Create a Student and Family Community Advisory Committee SEAT: (1) review current supplemental curriculum and determine need and (2) build 2-way communication process for feedback regarding professional development needs	Inclusionary Practices, UDL, MTSS Trauma Informed Practices and PBIS Tier 1 and 2 Access to core instruction with accommodations/modifications and writing inclusive IEP's REJ Throughline Two: Identity-Affirming Environments And Experiences
2026-27		Partner with transportation regarding students served in neighborhood schools SEAT: pilot curriculum if needed and follow CMAC process	Trauma Informed Practices and PBIS Tier 3 REJ Throughline Three: Student and Family Co-Design

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		Facilities upgrades	
2027-28	All 6 th graders promote to their neighborhood schools while 7 th -8 th graders age out of programs Add therapeutic behavior program within district		TBD
2028-29	8 th graders age out of programs		TBD

Our iterative plan will adapt to meet the changing needs of students, families, and staff, leveraging stakeholder input to advance racial and educational justice, equity, access, and inclusion.

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