

## **Inclusive Education Questions and Answers**

### ***1. What is the district's goal for achieving inclusive education?***

The district's goal is to ensure that the educational practices for children with disabilities are in alignment with federal and state mandates. To that end, increasing the numbers of children who are educated in the general education classroom with appropriate supports is necessary.

### ***2. What is inclusive education?***

The federal government has mandated that all children must be educated in the least restrictive environment. The least restrictive environment is not necessarily placement in the general education classroom. However, the general education classroom is the beginning point of consideration. The law requires that schools provide a continuum of services for students with disabilities, to ensure every child gets what he needs.

### ***3. What is the continuum of services?***

The continuum of services consist of eight delivery options for students. The delivery options are general education –no services, consultation, collaborative consultation, co-teaching, resource, co-teaching and resource, self-contained. Each option is clearly defined, inclusive of student characteristics, framework guidelines and teacher roles (document available upon request). The continuum is comprehensively presented during training.

### ***4. What is the model the district is going to use?***

There is no new model. The district will be ensuring a continuum of services is in place. The continuum has been required since the first law on disabilities was instituted in 1975. The continuum is not a model; it is a system of delivery options.

### ***5. We have had a lot of success with our "co-teaching" model. Why do we have to change?***

The "co-teaching" model as New Bedford defines is more of a "team teaching" model, where two teachers maintain a class load of general and special educators all day long. This model of service delivery results in a significant over-servicing of some children with special needs. When some children are over-serviced, that means a good number of others are under-serviced. Services to children must be driven by their needs and every child must get what they need.

### ***6. Will all special educators become consultants?***

One of the big challenges in New Bedford as in many other districts, is the use of terminology that does not clearly define roles or the use of one word to represent multiple options. Special educators, as always represent many roles. Being a consultant is typically a very small part of a special educator's day. Whether or not the special educator serves as a consultant will depend on the needs of the students. Typically, the numbers of children who need consult services is very low. That means

that the rest of the special educator's day will consist of providing the other delivery options on the continuum (i.e. collaborative consultation, co-teaching, resource).

**7. *What exactly will be my role as a general educator and a special educator?***

Your roles will be clearly defined in training. Your role will depend on the delivery option utilized. The delivery option utilized is determined by the need of the student.

**8. *When will I be trained and will I be trained before I have to implement?***

It is absolutely crucial for teachers to be trained before they implement. Unfortunately, some have already been placed in situations for which they have not been trained. Some of the placements are the result of IEP's already written that require students are taught in the general education classroom. Not to provide that service places the district at serious risk. Additionally, the many challenges we experienced last year interrupted our efforts to get more teachers trained. Nonetheless, it is our goal to ensure all teachers are trained as soon as possible. The training will take place during the school year. However, we cannot delay implementation until everyone is trained. Implementation will be a gradual and evolving process. The entire process should take approximately 3 years. We have outlined a 3-year process of training, implementation and follow-up. We are currently in Year 2 of the plan.

**9. *Will we have subs for the training?***

We will do our best to provide substitutes, however the substitute shortage will have a great impact on how successful we are in fulfilling the obligation.

**10. *What comprises the training and who must attend?***

The training is comprised of 3 days that will be stretched over several weeks or months. The training provides a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education collaborative relationships and instructional excellence. The instructional component is the most extensive and teachers leave with a clear understanding of their individual and joint roles in the planning, delivery and evaluation of instruction. Special educators and general educators should attend as partners for optimal benefit. Because there are more general education teachers than special educators, 1 - 3 general educators can attend with 1 special educator. They should all be from the same school, however. Special educators will not be required to attend the training for multiple sessions in order to ensure general educators have a partner.