

Chancellor's Memo



Dear Colleagues,

Today, I want to bring you up to date on the important work of making our system more responsive to the individual learning needs of students with disabilities, and our plans to implement this work citywide over the next two school years. Last February, the [Department announced a systemic reform](#) effort to improve how we support and educate students with disabilities. The goals of the reform are:

- to close the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities;
- to provide increased access to and participation in the general education curriculum; and
- to empower all schools to have greater curricular, instructional, and scheduling flexibility to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

More than 260 schools are participating in Phase One of the reform. In conjunction with their networks, these schools are developing instructional, programming, and staffing practices to advance the reform. This will provide students with disabilities improved access to the general education curriculum. During the remainder of this school year, we will strengthen the capacity-building work in all schools and accelerate our efforts to prepare schools to serve students with disabilities in accordance with our goals.

Given the rollout of the Special Education Student Information System (SEGIS) and the new New York State IEP, we will implement a full-scale launch of the reform in the 2012-13 school year while continuing to work with the schools already participating in the reform effort. Launching in the 2012-13 school year will allow the opportunity for all schools to go through an annual review cycle with both the new state IEP and SEGIS. In the time leading up to the start of the 2012-13 school year, we will work with school staff and administrators on building the instructional and operational capacity to implement the goals of the reform. Further, we will continue to develop best practices based on the experiences of Phase One schools. This will allow us to make key adjustments to help schools overcome any challenges that arise as we implement these reforms. Over the next 18 months, Deputy Chancellor Laura Rodriguez will provide you with periodic updates on key milestones, necessary preparations, and opportunities for you to learn more. You may also find further information and resources on the [intranet site for students with disabilities](#).

I am looking forward to working with you and parents to make sure that this important reform is carried out successfully. I encourage you to share this information with your School Leadership Team as well as your school community at large. This pioneering work will improve the social and educational fabric of our communities and the lives of all our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathleen P. Black". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cathleen P. Black
Chancellor