



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Specialized Instruction

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTION (OSI)

2013 SPECIAL EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

SCHOOL YEARS 2011-15

APPROVED: OCTOBER 28, 2011

REVISED: NOVEMBER 1, 2013



Making Strides, Shifting Focus

A Message from the Chief

In June 2013, the DC Public Schools (DCPS) Office of Specialized Instruction (OSI) staff convened to review our School Year 2011-15 Special Education Strategic Plan. At this midway point, recommendations were made to increase ownership of goals and objectives, streamline the strategic plan work, and focus on outcomes. Within this update, you will see a plan that reflects these shifts in the path to attaining our goals.

The strides that we have made in compliance allow us to increase our focus on achievement. We have long believed that Non-Public reduction and early identification are precursors to helping our students achieve at higher rates within increasingly inclusive environments. With marked progress in both of those areas, OSI is now poised to aggressively support student growth through dedicated focus on quality programs and student supports. These are the keys to ensuring durable gains for students. In order to drive this focus, the Strategic Plan goals were re-prioritized. Goals 1 and 2 —decreasing Non-Public and special education enrollment, respectively—have entered a “monitoring” phase and Goals 3 and 4, focusing on inclusion and academic achievement, have been elevated as key priorities requiring greater resources.

We are also entering new and exciting terrain. The Office of Special Education is now the Office of Specialized Instruction. In addition to Special Education, this new office now includes the former Office of Early Childhood Education (now Early Childhood Division) and the Office of Bilingual Education (now Language Acquisition Division). This expanded scope will allow us to leverage existing systems and supports built to improve special education to also boost achievement for our English Language Learners (ELL) and early childhood students. Since many of these cohorts of children overlap, we will be better able to provide a coordinated experience for students and their families.

As a result of these changes, OSI’s strategic vision statement has been broadened to serve “students requiring early childhood education, students with disabilities, and English language learners.” Although the Language Acquisition Division (LAD) and Early Childhood Division (ECD) are not part of the pre-existing Special Education Strategic Plan, including this update, they will be part of our next strategic planning period beginning in School Year 2014-15. In the interim, OSI is ensuring these students are provided the proper supports to excel. I hope you will join me in my commitment to provide high quality instruction, innovative programming, and cutting-edge post-secondary opportunities to our students.

We are DCPS. And we can do this.

Sincerely,



Nathaniel Beers, MD, MPA, FAAP

OSI Vision, Mission, and Operating Principles

VISION

The Office of Specialized Instruction's vision is for the District of Columbia Public Schools to be the district of choice for students requiring early childhood education, students with disabilities, and English language learners.

MISSION

We serve our students requiring additional supports by providing high-quality instruction and services as close to home as possible and in the timely and consistent manner they deserve.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

- We will first do no harm in making decisions for, with, and on behalf of students.
- We will make informed, data-driven decisions based on what is in the best interest of the child today and tomorrow.
- We value, trust, and support our people.
- We value both independent and collaborative thinking.
- We work collaboratively with our partners, including other central offices, schools, community organizations, and families.

Results of Our 2013 Strategic Plan Review

As part of the annual review of the strategic plan, the OSI Strategy and Performance team convened a focus group of OSI staff and strategic plan objective owners. The focus group met to identify the challenges and successes during the previous two years of implementation and to assess each objective's relevance with consideration given to OSI's vision and the Chancellor's "A Capitol Commitment" SY13-14 priorities.

The sessions bore out three key obstacles to strategic plan success. First, there was consensus that the initiative core team structure added to the complexity of implementing the strategic plan. Second, the strategic plan proved too large in scope to simultaneously implement all objectives. Third, staff pointed out that documenting and monitoring the strategic plan projects and activities proved cumbersome. In summary, the broad recommendation of the group was to simplify the OSI Strategic Plan and structure to make it more actionable and manageable.

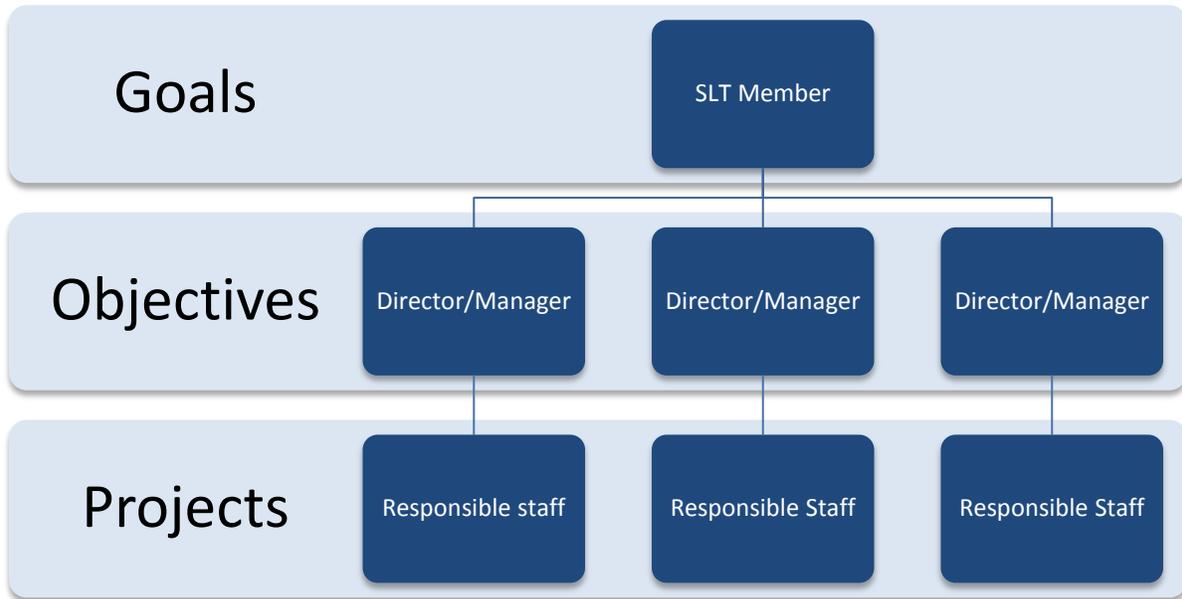
Senior Leadership reviewed the recommendations and findings of the focus group during an annual retreat and spent considerable time prioritizing objectives and project activities according to school year priorities.. This resulted in Senior Leadership addressing the focus group's concern that implementing all objectives simultaneously was difficult. Senior Leadership also agreed to dissolve the initiative core team structure, which previously functioned as the implementation structure by which objectives would be managed by dedicated teams. The revised structure provides a clear accountability chain for each

Key Strategic Plan Changes

- **Increased ownership by leaders in OSI**
- **Streamlined objectives and projects**
- **Intensified focus on outcomes**

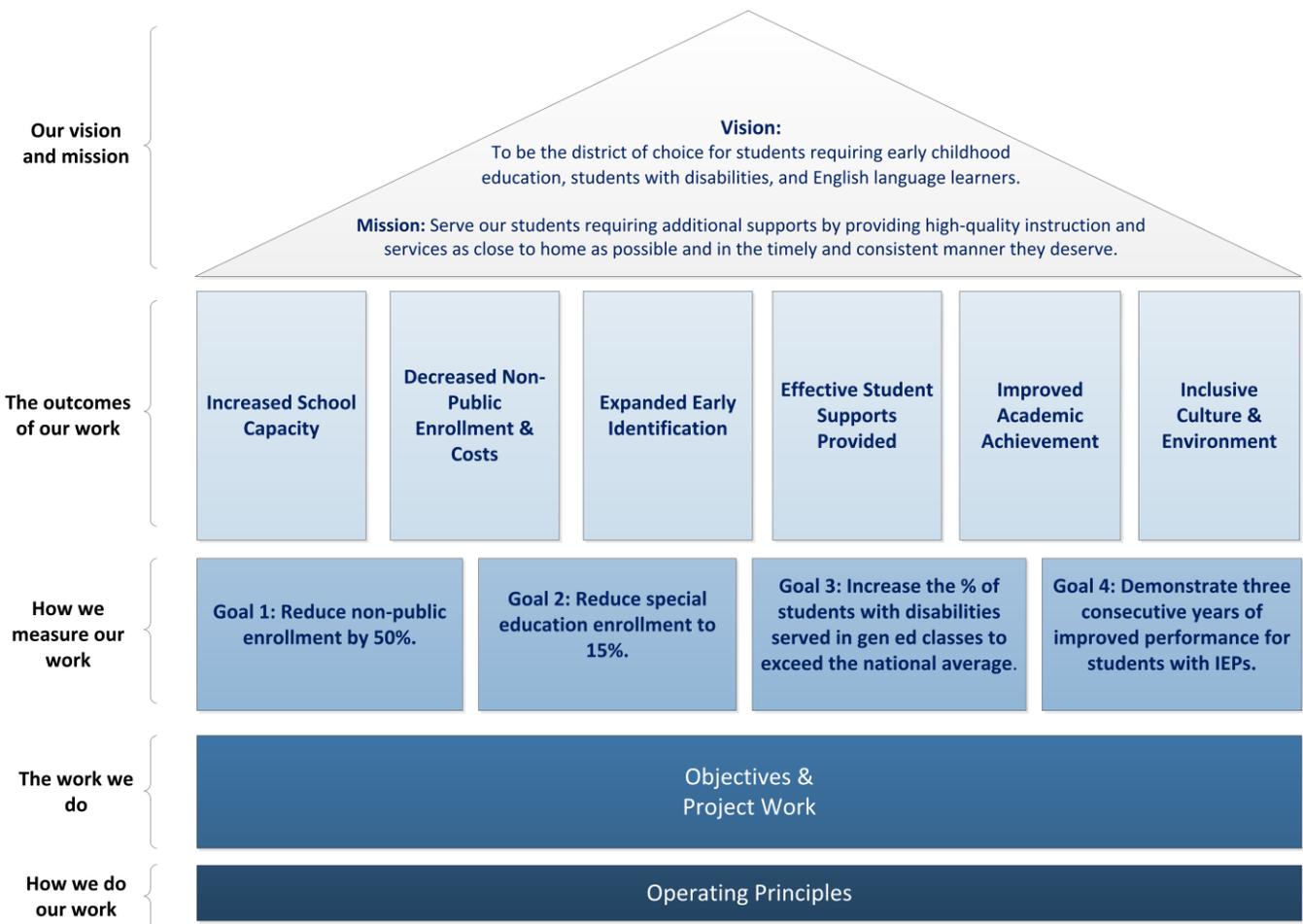
level of the strategic plan to better align day-to-day work to strategic objectives. To this end, four Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members were identified to lead the four strategic goals; directors and managers became objective leads; and responsible staff took project ownership. All these changes together will improve documenting and monitoring the strategic plan activities through the end of the Strategic Plan period. In conclusion, the annual review of the strategic plan resulted in clear priorities for school year 2013-14, clearer ownership of strategic goals and objectives, and a clearer strategic plan roadmap.

Strategic Plan Organizational Structure



Our Revised Strategy Map

Below is an updated map of the strategic plan; resembling a traditional school-house, it is important to note that these are the building blocks to our success. Principles form the foundation to our daily work, our daily work is aligned to and measured by our four bold goals, and our goals impact one or more of our desired outcome areas. These outcomes allow us to fulfill our mission and ensure that we realize our vision to be the district of choice for students requiring early childhood education, students with disabilities, and English language learners.



Our Desired Outcomes

Our six desired outcomes provide concrete indicators of whether we have achieved our mission. In the initial Strategic Plan, these functioned as “initiatives” by which objectives were managed by dedicated teams. In the Strategic Plan review process, OSI leadership found these initiatives had greater value in stating OSI’s core desired outcomes, reinforcing our focus and dedication to areas of improvement. The six desired outcomes are summarized below.

1. Increased neighborhood school capacity

Neighborhood schools need to have the necessary supports and services to meet the unique needs of the District’s students with disabilities now and into the future. OSI seeks to build a system that is robust yet flexible enough to accommodate the changing needs of individual students and the overall student population.

2. Decreased non-public enrollment and costs

OSI seeks to ensure that all students placed in a Non-Public school are educated in their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). With both existing and new placements, we seek to maximize each student’s opportunity to receive supports and services that will help them to succeed alongside their typically developing peers.

3. Expanded early identification

OSI seeks to increase the percentage of three to five year old children found eligible in the District so that we can provide supports and services when they have the greatest benefit, improving long-term education outcomes.

4. Effective student supports provided

OSI seeks to have clear student support systems that ensure consistent and effective interventions, modifications, accommodations, and services to students. OSI is committed to ensuring students receive appropriate high-quality supports in a timely manner by educating and training all stakeholders on best practices.

5. Improved academic achievement

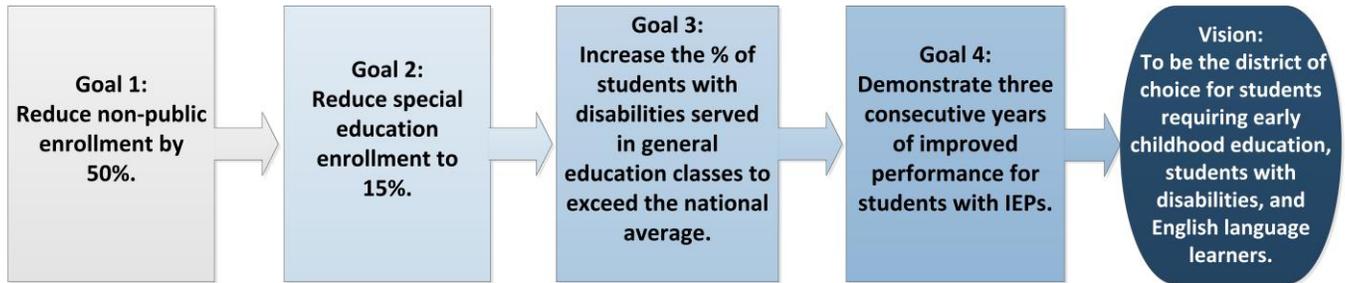
OSI seeks to advance the quality of the specialized instruction and services that students with disabilities receive to aggressively improve their academic outcomes and to better prepare them to pursue their dreams for life after high school.

6. Inclusive Culture and Environment

OSI seeks to ensure the culture in schools and the central office is welcoming to all students and the wider community. Establishing a culture of inclusiveness will provide a foundation from which schools can include all students in the general education curriculum and other school activities.

OSI Strategic Goals

The OSI Strategic Plan is comprised of four bold goals. These goals embody our theory of action: By reducing Non-Public enrollment and identifying students early for high-quality instruction and supports, increased inclusive opportunities and academic achievement will result.



The remainder of the document presents an overview of each of our four bold goals, providing:

- the connection to our desired outcomes;
- an assessment of current progress; and
- a statement of objectives supporting each goal.

Goal 1: Reduce Non-Public Enrollment by 50% (Monitoring Status)

OVERVIEW

DCPS believes students with disabilities will be better served in their neighborhood schools, closer to home, where they will have more opportunities to interact with their typically developing peers. In 2011, DCPS educated approximately 22% of its special education students in non-public educational settings, making it the most segregated district in the nation (the national average is 3% of special education students placed in a fully segregated setting). Two years later, that figure has been reduced by nearly half; 12.8% of the special education population is educated in Non-Public schools, and the number continues to grow smaller each school year.

GOAL OWNER

Deputy Chief of Compliance

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- ✓ Decreased Non-Public Enrollment and Costs
- ✓ Effective Student Supports Provided
- ✓ More Inclusive Culture and Environment

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

OSI has made enormous strides to ensure students are being placed in the least restrictive environment while receiving the supports they need. Since August of 2010, OSI has reduced Non-Public enrollment by 48%, on track to exceed its goal of 50% by the end of SY13-14. As a result of this progress, Goal 1 is in a monitoring status during SY13-14, as OSI maintains its gains and focuses on the quality of Non-Public service alignment and the deeper causes of enrollment into Non-Publics schools.

GOAL 1 SCHOOL YEAR 2013-2014 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

PRIORITIZATION	OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
<p>School Year 2013-14 Implementation</p>	<p>Objective 1: Improve transition and exit pathways for Non-Public students</p> <p>Objective 2: Ensure students are educated in the most appropriate environment according to individual needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the SY13-14 Non-Public enrolled students, 12.5% will exit via diploma track (DCPS standard diploma) and 4% of students will exit via LRE placement by August 2014. • The number of students entering Non-Public schools via Hearing Office Determination will be reduced by 10% and Settlement Agreements by 12%.
<p>School Year 2013-14 Monitoring Activities</p>	<p>Objective 3: Maintain accurate data reflecting the actual population of students enrolled in Non-Public schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% accuracy of students enrolled in Non-Public schools.
<p>School Year 2014-15 Planned Activities</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

Goal 2: Reduce Special Education Enrollment to 15% (Monitoring Status)

OVERVIEW

DCPS believes that early identification and intervention will best position students with disabilities to succeed in school. Children who receive services for a developmental delay before they start school have substantial advantages over children who receive them later. Because their needs are being met, these children learn more easily, are better able to meet expectations for their grade level, and may see their delays reduced or even eliminated within a few years.

The alternative –waiting until an observable achievement gap has emerged before responding to a child's needs— results in the reduced impact of services and, consequently, a much longer retention time in special education. A focus on early intervention prevents an unnecessarily high number of children being enrolled and retained in special education, while simultaneously supporting system-wide goals of increasing academic proficiency and positioning children to enjoy school.

GOAL OWNER

Executive Director, Early Stages

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- ✓ Increased Neighborhood School Capacity
- ✓ Expanded Early Identification
- ✓ Effective Student Supports Provided

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

Since 2009, early identification of eligible children has been a central strategy to the long-term reduction of the DCPS special education population. Our Early Stages Center has increased the identification rate of 3-5 year olds in the last few years to nearly 9%, an over four-fold increase since 2009, and is identifying these students in a more timely fashion than ever before. Given this immense progress, Goal 2 implementation is in a monitoring phase in SY13-14, as we maintain our gains and continue to further strengthen the early identification program.

GOAL 2 SCHOOL YEAR 2013-14 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

PRIORITIZATION	OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
<p>School Year 2013-14 Implementation</p>	<p>Objective 1: Maximize early identification of 3-5 year old children.</p> <p>Objective 2: Build capacity with external partners to support a sustainable child-find system.</p> <p>Objective 3: Assure alignment between eligibility criteria and student needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve 8.5% identification rate; 95% timely transition and evaluation process by June 2014. • 50% of identified providers are performing screening activities by June 2014.
<p>School Year 2013-14 Monitoring Activities</p>	<p>Objective 4: Implement assessment processes and tools that better determine educational impact for early childhood population.</p> <p>Objective 5: Increase the number of children eligible from birth to three years old.</p> <p>Objective 6: Standardize school-wide Section 504 processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment processes implemented with 95% fidelity. • Increase the number of eligible children ages 0-3 years old to the national average for urban jurisdictions that use a 25% delay eligibility criterion.
<p>School Year 2014-15 Planned Activities</p>	<p>Objective 7: Increase the rate of children eligible for special education within core and under-identified constituencies.</p>	<p>To be determined.</p>

Goal 3: Increase the % of Students with Disabilities Served in General Education Classes to Exceed the National Average (Priority Goal)

OVERVIEW

Special education students should receive supports and services that will help them to succeed alongside their peers in a general education classroom whenever possible, as data shows that all students in inclusive settings have better educational and social outcomes.

The best way to drive inclusion at neighborhood schools is to ensure we are systematically providing a full-continuum of services to students with disabilities. This goal focuses on developing systems and clear processes so that schools consistently provide effective interventions, modifications, accommodations, and services to students.

GOAL OWNER

Senior Director, Related Services

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- ✓ Effective Student Supports Provided
- ✓ Increased Neighborhood School Capacity
- ✓ More Inclusive Culture and Environment

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

Over the past two years, OSI has developed clear data systems and documented processes to increase the efficiency and impact of special education supports. However, we have much work to do to expand the continuum of supports, such that capacity in neighborhood schools is widened, service delivery improved, and school staff is better supported. Currently, only 49% of DCPS special education students are in the regular classroom 80% or more of the day; by June 2015 we aim to reach 62%. Therefore, Goal 3 is in priority status for SY13-14. OSI is convinced that laser focus to increase capacity of neighborhood schools and provide excellent supports is key to the overall success of the Strategic Plan.

GOAL 3 SCHOOL YEAR 2013-14 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

PRIORITIZATION	OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
<p>School Year 2013-14 Implementation</p>	<p>Objective 1: Support schools in offering a continuum of services to promote inclusion.</p> <p>Objective 2: Increase related service delivery rates.</p> <p>Objective 3: Ensure schools are aligned to OSI strategic goals and provide support where deficiencies exist.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average hours of specialized instruction outside of general education is reduced by 11% by June 2014. • Increase service delivery rates by 25 percentage points by June 2014. • 50% of schools will achieve an average of Level 3 or better by June 2015, as measured by key indicators of the OSI school performance rubric.
<p>School Year 2013-14 Monitoring Activities</p>	<p>Objective 4: Standardize the IEP process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% compliance with IEP timelines.
<p>School Year 2014-15 Planned Activities</p>	<p>Objective 5: Align principal training and performance measures with OSI strategic goals</p>	<p>To be determined.</p>

Goal 4: Demonstrate Three Consecutive Years of Improved Performance for Students with IEPs on DC CAS and DC CAS Alt (Priority Goal)

OVERVIEW

OSI is committed to ensuring all students are prepared for college, career and life. Goal 4 addresses this commitment by prioritizing improved academic achievement for students with disabilities. This will occur through targeted, high quality literacy instruction that will set the foundation for all student learning. In order to accomplish Goal 4, teachers must be appropriately trained, parents and community members must be involved, and students must be actively engaged in their plan for post-secondary transition.

GOAL OWNER

Deputy Chief, Inclusive Programming

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- ✓ Effective Student Supports Provided
- ✓ Improved Academic Achievement

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

Historically, the work to achieve full compliance with state and federal laws, in addition to managing Non-Public enrollment and increasing early childhood identification has eclipsed the goal of ensuring considerable academic gains in special education cohorts. This is no longer the case: in SY13-14, academic achievement is a top priority. OSI will build on the gains made by Special Education students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), where Special Education students made more gains in 4th grade math and 8th grade reading and math than general education students. OSI will do this by increasing its investment in school programs and teachers, providing robust training supports, and leveraging testing tools to increase student academic achievement. This aggressive approach to increasing student achievement is complemented by the recent inclusion of Early Childhood Division (ECD) and Language Acquisition Division (LAD) under the OSI banner, creating a valuable opportunity to reach different student demographics earlier and in new ways.

GOAL 4 SCHOOL YEAR 2013-14 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

PRIORITIZATION	OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
<p>School Year 2013-14 Implementation</p>	<p>Objective 1: Improve reading skills through enhanced literacy instruction.</p> <p>Objective 2: Ensure that staff has the training and on-going support to boost student achievement.</p> <p>Objective 3: Improve stakeholder engagement to ensure students are prepared for post-secondary transition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of students will show two grade levels of growth as measured by Lexile scores by June 2015. • 85% of special education teachers score effective or highly effective on TLF average by June 2015. • 80% of students referred to RSA transition to post-secondary opportunities by June 2015.
<p>School Year 2013-14 Monitoring Activities</p>	<p>Objective 4: Identify and provide training for students with communication and social skills needs.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>School Year 2014-15 Planned Activities</p>	<p>Objective 5: Graduate all students with a diploma or certificate at rates that meet or exceed the national average.</p>	<p>To be determined.</p>