

Special Education Management Case Study



The Client

Newark Public Schools

The Project

Building District-wide Capacity for the Effective Management and Delivery of Special Education Services:

- Special Education Operations and Services Audit
- Special Education Case Management Tools
- Professional Development for Child Study Teams, Classroom Teachers, and Administrators

The Opportunity

Newark Public Schools (NPS) sought an experienced partner to transform the culture and capacity across New Jersey's largest public school district. The goal was to empower child study teams, educators, and administrators to more effectively manage special education compliance and student outcomes. Public Consulting Group (PCG) partnered with NPS, and through a mix of technology, professional development and technical assistance, PCG subject matter experts and compliance specialists were contracted to provide up-front consultative support and guidance with respect to special education operations. Following the successful completion of the special education operations review, NPS again partnered with PCG to develop and deploy a district-wide web-based special education case management and reporting platform.

The PCG Approach

PCG worked closely with many NPS stakeholders, including the Offices of Special Education Programs, Data & Policy, Pupil Transportation, Information Services, Legal Services, the Family Support Center, and the Business Administrator, to conduct a comprehensive special education operation review. In November 2014, PCG partnered with NPS for a second time to implement a district-wide, web-based special education case management and reporting platform, EasyIEP™, to facilitate IEP development, case management, secure data sharing, and integration with other NPS systems. Further, PCG leveraged its experience and knowledge of best practices to develop new features that helped Child Study Teams better meet the needs of students.

Employing a collaborative approach, PCG worked with NPS to build stronger special education procedures using EasyIEP. The implementation served as a platform to drive change and to create a stronger data management culture. The final system configuration now facilitates the following processes across the district:

- Timely scheduling and delivery of services
- Ensuring and monitoring least restrictive environments
- Management of specialized transportation
- State and district testing accommodations and modifications used

- Connecting present levels of academic and functional performance with key IEP components
- Creating and monitoring progress towards annual student goals and objectives

PCG designed and continues to deliver a blended learning professional development curriculum that has built capacity among special education teachers, child study team members, principals, vice principals, assistant superintendents, special education directors, supervisors, and administrators. PCG used its knowledge of how the EasyIEP application supports policies and procedures from the Special Education Operational Review to develop and implement a curriculum that includes lessons with the following topics: system functionality; ensuring legal compliance; developing strong and effective IEPs; and developing and monitoring student progress towards goals. Further, the PCG Help Desk provides all NPS users real time support with a one business day response guarantee, whether submitted via telephone, email or the embedded EasyIEP Message Board. These inquiries are then tracked and shared with the stakeholder team in order to inform various training and support resources, as well as policy and procedures shifts, where needed.

The Result

To date, PCG has helped NPS to construct several special education procedures manuals based on best practices in the areas of IEP development and creation; a manual regarding specialized transportation is forthcoming, a product of successful interdepartmental collaboration. To aid NPS in submitting accurate and timely monitoring reports, technical assistance is offered on an ongoing basis, with exit strategy planning being a key driver of this work. PCG processes more than 500 support inquiries via email or phone and nearly 2,500 inquiries via EasyIEP's message board per year. PCG continues to support existing teams and new staff members through monthly professional development webinars and continued on-site trainings. This includes the design and delivery of more than 60 live, custom trainings. In addition, PCG has worked with NPS to facilitate communication between the school-based Medicaid reimbursement team and data collection and reporting teams with the Office of Special Education Programs in order to maximize both programs.