Citywide Developmental Cognitive Disability (DCD) Program

This citywide special education program serves Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) students from kindergarten to grade 12 with significant educational needs related to significant cognitive disability. Individuals appropriate for this specialized citywide program are those who require a higher level of special education services than can be provided in the student's community or home school.

Characteristics of Students:

Students in this program typically demonstrate needs in cognitive and intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior domains (daily living and independent living skills, social and interpersonal skills, communication skills, academics, recreation and leisure skills, community participation skills, and work and work-related skills). Students perform significantly behind their peers in school, home and community and require greater adult supervision and support.

Program Description:

This model provides special education services to students with emphasis on developing functional and academic skills. Services are provided in a variety of settings, including general education and special education classrooms, community environments, and job training sites. All educational and transition areas are addressed based on student needs as outlined in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Alternative curriculum is provided to students that includes instruction in daily and independent living, communication, community participation, recreational and leisure, work and work-related skill development. There are two specific curriculums that are used when students need an alternative to core curriculum:

Unique Learning System is an online, standards-based set of interactive tools specifically designed for students with special needs to access the general curriculum. Used daily in classrooms across the district, Unique Learning System provides preschool through transition students with rigorous, standards-based materials specifically designed to meet their instructional needs. Users interact with differentiated, thematic units of study with text to speech, interactive components, hundreds of activities and multiple opportunities to show what they know. Books, lessons & activities are viewable on a variety of hardware platforms, including tablets, whiteboards, and smartboards. Additionally, n2y's (news-2-you) proprietary user interface and tools combine with touch technology to encourage engagement and exploration of many types of content.

The STAR Program (Strategies for Teaching based on Autism Research) teaches children with autism the critical skills identified by the 2001 National Research Council and uses evidence-based practices. The ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) instructional methods of discrete trial training, pivotal response training and teaching functional routines form the instructional base, which is aligned to Common Core State Standards, of this comprehensive program for children with autism. The STAR Program includes detailed lesson plans, teaching materials, data systems and a curriculum-based assessment for teaching in the six curricular areas of receptive language, expressive language, spontaneous language, functional routines, academics, and play & social skills.