

Citywide Special Program for Elementary Needs (SPEN)

This citywide special education program serves Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) students from kindergarten to grade five with significant educational needs related to significant social emotional and behavioral needs. 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:

These students have received special education services in their home school but their needs require more intensive special education services than can be provided. The students placed in the SPAN classrooms are in need of a highly-structured educational setting and individualized instruction.

Program Description:

SPAN classrooms are highly structured special education classrooms that provide individualized instruction in a small group setting. A highly-structured, proactive approach to teaching appropriate social and classroom behavior is employed in the classroom. Behavior management techniques are based on behavioral principles that are supported by research. Students are taught using the general education curriculum. Based on student's needs this curriculum is modified or alternative curriculum is used when necessary. Academic instruction is individualized for students. Behavior curriculum is a direct instruction approach to teaching appropriate behavior.

Characteristics of Students:

The Special Programs for Elementary Needs (SPEN) program provides educational services to students who have been identified as having Emotional and/or Behavioral Disorders (E/BD). These students have received special education services in their home school but their needs require more intensive special education services than can be provided in federal settings I and II. Students may receive up to 60% of their day of special education services in their home school before a SPEN placement is considered. The students placed in the SPEN classrooms are in need of a highly structured educational setting and individualized instruction. Adaptations and modifications in the general education setting are not sufficient to meet their needs. The social emotional curriculum used is Second Step. The Second Step program for Kindergarten through Grade 5 is a universal, classroom-based program designed to increase students' school success and decrease problem behaviors by promoting social-emotional competence and self-regulation. It teaches skills that strengthen students' ability to learn, have empathy, manage emotions, and solve problems. The Second Step program targets key risk and protective factors linked to a range of problem behaviors. Equipping students with Second Step skills helps a school create a safer, more respectful learning environment that promotes school success for all.