Local Law 18 Annual Report

October 26, 2026

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Introduction

School Year 2025–2026 (SY26) marked the second full year of NYC Public Schools' implementation of Local Law 18 (LL18), legislation signed into law in February 2023. LL18 is designed to improve the transition from high school to higher education for students with disabilities by facilitating the secure, electronic sharing of special education documentation—such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and evaluation records—with institutions of higher education (IHEs).

Building upon the foundation established in SY25, NYCPS made significant systems-level improvements to increase access and participation. In SY26, NYCPS shifted from an opt-in system at IEP meetings to an automatic opt-in selection for all graduating seniors. This change ensured that every graduating senior was proactively contacted in their final months of high school and asked to identify where their special education records should be sent in support of accessing accommodations in higher education.

Under this new process:

- Beginning at age 14, students and families continue to receive a letter as part of the IEP package describing LL18 and the importance of sharing information with IHEs
- Students aged 18 or older are contacted directly
- Parents or guardians are contacted on behalf of students who will be under the age of 18 at the time of commitment to an IHE
- All students and families retain the ability to opt out (document sharing remains optional)

This shift represents a critical step toward equitable access by ensuring that all transition-aged students are informed of and supported in utilizing LL18, rather than relying solely on participation and informed consent during IEP meetings.

NYCPS is currently tracking how many students "opt-out" of this process locally at the school level via direct to student outreach via email while a system is built to capture opt-outs digitally for reporting purposes. NYCPS is hopeful that this new process will result in significantly higher participation. Anecdotal reports support this assessment.

This report outlines the outcomes, outreach, and impact of LL18's implementation for the most recent

school year. It provides a foundation for continued refinement and expansion in future years as NYCPS continues to deepen its commitment to equitable postsecondary pathways for students with disabilities.

Student Participation

For SY26, participation reflects both the prior opt-in model and the transition to universal outreach:

- Prior to implementing the automatic outreach model, **131 students or parents opted in** to electronic document sharing during SY26
- This occurred out of approximately 60,939 transition-aged students who received the LL18 letter as part of their IEP package

Following the implementation of the automatic opt-in outreach for graduating seniors, NYCPS ensured:

- All graduating seniors with IEPs (22,322 students) were contacted by their schools regarding document sharing
- All eligible students and families (if the student would be under the age of 18 upon graduation) were given the opportunity to indicate a destination where records were shared, or to opt out

NYCPS is continuing to refine systems to track outcomes associated with this expanded outreach approach, including opt-out rates and confirmed document transfers. To review the email template provided to schools to send to graduating high school seniors in the interim, see *Attachments*.

CUNY-NYCPS Memorandum of Understanding

Late in SY26, NYCPS and CUNY reached an agreement to amend the existing admissions memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding the sharing of IEPs, 504 Plans, and a student's most recent special education evaluation documents solely for the purpose of determining eligibility for disability support services on CUNY campuses (this information will not be considered as part of the admissions process).

- Under the new MOU, NYCPS students matriculating to CUNY who are committed to a campus will automatically have their disability status and relevant documents shared.
- Committed students will be provided the opportunity to opt out of having their information shared with CUNY.
- NYCPS staff will discuss self-reporting a disability during Individual Progress Review meetings, IEP meetings, and transition consultancies.

Description of Assistance Provided

In addition to direct student support, NYCPS expanded professional learning and outreach efforts in SY26:

Professional Learning and Staff Capacity Building Resources

- In September 2025, all school-based Transition Team Leads (TTLs) were trained on LL18, ensuring school-based staff are equipped to implement the updated outreach model
- College Planning Guide for Students with Disabilities, Students with IEPs & 504 Plans was updated for SY26 and shared with College & Career Advisors for dissemination to students (available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Bangla, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Haitian Creole, and Urdu)
- To streamline the college transition for approximately 65,000 graduating seniors, the

SUNY & CUNY Welcome Letter Initiative serves as a strategic roadmap for informing students of the opportunity to attend these institutions and secure higher education disability services.

- In addition to a robust welcome letter, the initiative guides students and families through building self-advocacy and collecting diagnostic files before graduation, obtaining formal consent during senior year to transfer special education records directly to CUNY and higher education institutions, and connecting with local networks such as Transition Team Leaders, Parent Coordinators, and Borough TCACs.
- Furthermore, it outlines the digital accommodation workflow directing students to submit a "New Confidential Accommodation Request" and upload supporting documentation via CUNY Accommodate in CUNYfirst, complete an interactive intake interview with a Disability Services Office (DSO) specialist to establish reasonable accommodations, and submit renewal requests each term to ensure professors receive official digital accommodation letters.

Family and Student Engagement Opportunities

- NYCPS, through the Division of Inclusive & Accessible Learning (DIAL) and in partnership with Advocates for Children's Transition Alliance, expanded family-facing programming:
  - Hosted a two-day virtual Transition Consultancy Summit (April 18 & 21)
    - Families met with TCAC staff and partner organizations to discuss:
      - Preparing for postsecondary transition
      - Understanding LL18 & the differences between high school and college accommodations
  - Hosted a multi-part, transition themed Beyond Access Webinar Series
    - Transition & postsecondary topics, including LL18 were covered in detail and recordings of the sessions remain available to the public:
      - Understanding Transition Planning and Postsecondary Options for Students with Disabilities
      - From Vision to Plan: Strengthening Transition Planning for Students with IEPs
      - From Planning to Preparation: Preparing Students, Empowering Families, and Understanding Your Rights
      - Planning for Adulthood: College Access and Accommodations for Students with IEPs
    - This series will continue into SY27
- DIAL postsecondary team attended the third annual York EmpowerED transitional bruncheon & presented to high school students & school staff on LL18 (March 6th, 2026 in person at York College in Queens)

Outreach and Communications

- Reminder to schools about senior outreach responsibilities was communicated to all schools via Principal's Digest on May 5th

- Schools were provided email templates for both student and IHE outreach (see *Attachments*)
- Student-facing awareness promoted through a DIAL Instagram post on June 22nd

Student Advocate Duties

Transition and College Access Center (TCAC) Postsecondary Engagement Managers (PEMs) continue to serve as student advocates, providing information and support to students with disabilities regarding obtaining accommodations in higher education.

- There are currently five (5) PEMs staffed citywide — one per borough
- PEMs continue to meet with students regarding obtaining accommodations at institutions of higher education via Transition Consultancies
- PEMs connect students seeking higher education at a CUNY campus to CUNY Offices of Disability and their respective point persons
- PEMs attend CUNY public forums and collaborate on accessibility initiatives

This school year, these five PEMs have supported 3,482 students across the city with connections to higher education disability offices to determine eligibility for accommodations.

Evaluation of Outreach Efforts

The transition to an automatic opt-in model in SY26 represents a major advancement in ensuring equitable access to LL18. Early indicators suggest significantly broader reach compared to prior IEP-based opt-in models.

However, several areas for improvement have been identified:

1. **Tracking Opt-Outs:** NYCPS is developing systems to consistently document students who choose to opt out; strengthening this infrastructure will improve data accuracy and program evaluation.

2. **Data Integration and Systems Improvement:** Collaboration between NYCPS and CUNY is ongoing, memorialized in the recently amended MOU, with a goal of enabling seamless communication when students commit to CUNY institutions.

3. **Continued Outreach Expansion:** Continue use of multi-channel outreach (e.g., webinars, social media, school communications) to ensure students and families understand their rights and associated processes.

4. **Monitoring Impact of Universal Outreach Model:** NYCPS will continue analyzing participation rates, record transmission outcomes, and student access to accommodations at IHEs post-enrollment to the greatest extent possible.

NYCPS remains committed to refining LL18 implementation to ensure all students with disabilities are supported in accessing higher education accommodations and achieving successful postsecondary transitions.

Attachments

Document: Updated College Accommodations Letter in SESIS

Date __/__/__

Dear Parent or Guardian of:

Date of Birth: **Local ID:**

As your child thinks about their journey beyond high school, it is important to learn as much as possible about the disability services offered at the college, vocational school, or other Institution of Higher Education (IHE) they plan to attend. Various IHEs offer different types of support, and most have an Office of Disability Services. That Office, which may be known by a different name depending on the IHE, will review records related to a student's disability to ensure that they are eligible to receive accommodations or services. Examples of services or accommodations that may be available through these offices include (but are not limited to):

- Sign language interpreter services
- Extra time for testing or testing in a separate location
- Assistive technologies
- Readers and/or note takers

Students with disabilities are not required to receive accommodations, and some find they do not need them at their IHE. Others may decide they only need an accommodation or service for a specific semester or class. If a student does request support, decisions regarding specific accommodations or services are made by campus staff based on documentation provided by the student and are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Every college campus operates differently, and disability offices may have different names and documentation requirements. If your child is found to be eligible, the Disability Office will create an accommodations plan based on the documentation provided.

Students with disabilities may be eligible for accommodations even if enrolled in a non-traditional, non-degree seeking program. Many IHEs have programs for students who don't pursue a degree but want to experience college, or for students who participate in the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA). To learn more about these programs, you can explore the ThinkCollege online college search. Students and families can also ask for more information from their school's Transition Team Leader, parent coordinator, or your local Transition and College Access Center.

Your child's school supports their readiness for their next step after high school by making sure that dual enrollment and other types of college planning are talked about in IEP meetings and advising meetings. The school can also help your child locate the disability office and make sure they understand how to get support for their disability at the IHE they plan to attend. A student's borough Transition & College Access Center can also help with this process and can be contacted at nyctcacs@schools.nyc.gov.

If your child wants to request accommodations at their IHE, they will likely need special education documents, such as their last IEP and recent evaluations. You are encouraged to ask for copies of these documents before your child takes their next step beyond high school. **To make this process easier, New York City Public Schools will send relevant special education documents directly to your child's IHE, with your child's permission. Your child's school will soon contact them during their senior year regarding this process.** If your child is under the age of 18 when enrolling with an IHE, their school will contact you to obtain this permission.

We encourage you and your child to take advantage of the opportunity to share this information, as it helps set them up for success in the next stage of their journey.

Document: Student Outreach Email Sample Template

Subject: Opportunity to Share Documents for Higher Education Accommodations

Dear student,

As you near the end of your high school journey, we want to set you up for success in the future. A recent New York City law requires, with your permission, that we send your special education documents to the next institution you plan on attending if you will be seeking disability-related accommodations. The purpose of sending these documents is to make sure you get the right accommodations and/or services to help you be successful. These documents typically include your Individualized Education Program (IEP) and most recent evaluation but can also include other documents upon request.

If you would like your special education documents forwarded, we are asking that you **reply to this message with an e-mail address for the appropriate contact at the institution you plan to attend.** Higher education disability offices may have a webpage that lists a dedicated e-mail for the office. Note that disability offices are also very commonly known as "Offices of Accessibility." If you don't have a contact, but do have a destination in mind, feel free to reply with that information. You may also request that these documents be sent directly to you or anyone else of your choosing, then you can share them as needed.

ACTION ITEM:

- **Please reply and share an *e-mail address*** where you would like your special education documents from your high school sent
- They may be sent to your next educational institution, yourself, or anyone of your choosing

Our goal is for you to become the best version of yourself as you take your next step. We believe one aspect of that is having every possible tool in your toolbox as you move forward. Ensuring your special education documents get to your next educational destination will play an important part in doing just that.

Thank you.

Document: IHE Outreach Email Sample Template

Subject: STUDENT NAME - High School Special Education Records

Dear Administrator,

Please find enclosed the high school special education records on file for STUDENT NAME. This student has specifically requested that New York City Public Schools forward the attached records to your institution in anticipation of their matriculation. We kindly ask that you retain these documents and utilize them in the event this student requests services or accommodations from your office. We're excited for this student's next step, and the contributions we're confident they'll make on campus.

Yours very truly,
(CONTACT NAME)