INTRODUCTION
Wayfinder Family Services’ Special Education School offers children and youth, ages 5 to 22, who are visually impaired or have moderate-to-severe disabilities a safe, positive environment for learning and growth. Teachers develop students’ communication, mobility and functional skills to increase their independence in our state-certified non-public school with a low staff-to-student ratio of 1:2. We offer PT, OT, SLP, TVI and O&M.

OUR PROJECT: SPECIALIZED COVID-SAFE INSTRUCTION
We had managed the pandemic safely but needed to reinvent our instructional strategies to include new hands-on, high-interest learning and social experiences within new health protocols for medically fragile students with multiple disabilities. The City of Hope Healthy Living Grant was the boost we needed to overcome the challenges we faced.

OUR GOALS
• ROUTINES: Re-established new instructional routines to promote self-confidence and comfort for students in their classrooms following extended periods of at-home instruction.
• HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION: For students with visual impairments and multiple disabilities, increased hours of 1:1 therapeutic interventions to recoup and continue to gain skills in communication, orientation & mobility, braille, tactile efficiency and self advocacy.

WHAT WE DID
• New lesson plans with accessible routines, enrichment and group engagement.
• Daily specialized PE and movement activities.
• Created personalized, hands-on materials.
• Emphasized therapeutic services and skill recoupment – specifically for vision and mobility services.

COMMUNITY BUILDING
School-wide celebrations & events
Designed motivating, social events to encourage confidence and communication in a variety of experiences.

WHAT WE LEARNED
• The students were very eager to return after a year of at-home instruction. Our students with visual impairments especially love going to lessons with their specialized vision services and mobility instructors who help them reach their potential.
• Our students thrive in learning environments where expectations are predictable, and activities include repetition so that they can confidently engage. Popular PE and movement activities helped link students back to site-based classes.
• We are able to be onsite and manage the risks of Covid-19 safely as a medically-fragile school community.