

Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT
ALPINE SCHOOL DISTRICT
February 22, 2007

The attached report contains the results of the first two phases (Self-Assessment Process and On-Site Validation Visit) of the Utah Special Education Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS). This Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process is conducted by the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) Special Education Services (SES), as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B. The process is designed to focus resources on improving results for students with disabilities through enhanced partnerships between district programs, USOE-SES, the Utah Personnel Development Center, parents, and advocates.

The first phase of this process included the completion of the Self-Assessment and the development of a Program Improvement Plan. The second phase, On-Site Validation, conducted in Alpine School District on February 6-8, 2007, included student record reviews, interviews with district administrators, school administrators, related service professionals, teachers, parents, and students. Parent surveys were also mailed to a small sample of parents. Information from these data sources was shared in an exit meeting attended by staff from Alpine School District and members of the Steering Committee.

This report contains a more complete description of the process utilized to collect data and to determine strengths, areas out of compliance with the requirements of IDEA, and recommendations for improvement in each of the core IDEA areas.

Areas of Strength

The validation team found the following:

General Supervision

- The Special Education Department is very proactive in developing CSPD activities that meet the needs of NCLB requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers to ensure that the teachers use best practices in literacy and math.
- Alpine SD develops CSPD activities that prepare the LEAs, general education teachers, special education teachers, and paraeducators to follow federal and state rules and regulations.
- Alpine SD Special Education Department has developed three literacy cohorts for elementary and secondary special education teachers that provide not only literacy training for teachers but SRB materials so that every teacher can be a skilled teacher of reading.
- Alpine SD provides monthly training by our teacher leaders on IDEA 2004 rules and regulations. This training is provided in school team meetings with the LEA and special education team members and is documented.
- Yearlong support is provided for first year teachers, interns and teachers on LOAs with three day training in the summer and a monthly meeting throughout the year to provide continuing support and contact with the other first year teachers. Topics covered in this training include: literacy, numeracy, classroom management, data recording and collection, LRBI, motivation, and IDEA rules and regulations.
- Ongoing training has resulted in an increase in teacher retention efforts.
- Alpine SD Special Education Department conducts annual file monitoring with teachers and uses that opportunity to train teachers of proper file order, file requirements, and in writing PLAAFPs and goals.
- Teacher manuals have been developed to guide special education teachers through file order, necessary forms, provides guidelines for compliance requirements, and other items to help them navigate special education requirements.
- Training for paraeducators is provided which includes: working with unique disabilities, how to support the classroom teacher, LRBI, positive behavioral supports, and confidentiality.
- Alpine SD staff attend State and National trainings to remain abreast of current best practices and implement appropriate training with other staff.
- Special education staff are surveyed to determine professional development needs. Professional development needs are also determined from input from teacher leaders and building administrators.
- Special education teachers on Letter of Authorization (LOAs) are provided with ongoing professional development and additional district support.
- The Alpine School District Special Education Department has developed a collaborative relationship with the Curriculum Department; both are collaborating on Response to Intervention (RtI) initiatives. Certain school sites have started working towards implementation of a three-tier literacy model.
- CRT results show an upward trend in scores for all students in both language arts and math.

- Evaluation reports from school psychologists document most testing, student primary home language and information from parents, and include recommendations for eligibility.
- Confidentiality procedures are in place throughout the school district. Records are maintained in locked cabinets with Access Authorization lists, include Record of Access form with signatures, special education teachers and LEAs attend annual training regarding confidentiality, and paraeducators receive training and sign a confidentiality agreement. UPIPS staff were asked to sign Records of Access in multiple settings.
- Notice of child find is disseminated throughout Alpine School District, including schools, homeless shelter, private schools, Early Intervention providers, doctor's offices, etc. The notice is available in English and Spanish languages. All interviewed school staff members accurately described the district Child Find process and procedures.
- Professional development in special education is based on teacher and student needs as determined by data. It is provided in a variety of formats, such as large group trainings, team meetings, and written "Proactive Measures". Training is provided for special education teachers, general education teachers, paraprofessionals, LEAs and parents.
- Administrators receive biannual training from the Alpine School District Special Education Department regarding special education rules and regulations.
- During file reviews, interviews and focus groups, there was evidence of effort from Alpine School District special education staff actively working toward their Program Improvement Plan and Corrective Action Plan goals.
- There is strong district level support for special education teachers and students. In addition to district support from the Special Education Department, which collaborates with other district departments, teacher leaders provide site specific support in areas of need in each school.
- Teacher Leaders demonstrated great knowledge of file requirements, school staff, and students.
- Each secondary school in Alpine School District has developed a reading class for students with disabilities who continue to need additional reading instruction.
- Files are well organized.
- Referrals were included in each reviewed special education file. Files also contained evidence that referrals had been reviewed and approved by an LEA before the evaluation process started.
- Alpine Summit has implemented a system of IEP review and revision for each student with disabilities upon enrollment and attendance at the school.
- Administrators consistently use the AS400 data system to provide school level data to the district and state.
- Each school site visited had a positive attitude towards all students. School staff demonstrated a caring and respectful attitude towards other staff members, students, parents, and UPIPS team members.

Parent Involvement

- Alpine SD has a knowledgeable and active Special Education Parent Council.
- IEP teams are encouraged to work with parents in resolving conflict at the school level. Additional support is provided at the district level when requested by any member of the IEP team.
- Alpine SD participates as partners with the Family Links conference by providing break out sessions, a venue, registration support, and planning.
- A Parent Night, attended by over 100 parents, is held annually in the spring to highlight school and district programs.
- Parents, administrators, teachers and the district office personnel generally have good working relationships, as indicated during parent focus groups.
- Most parents are happy with services provided, teachers providing the services, the administrators who ensure those services and their school in general, in indicated during parent focus groups.
- Monthly transition meetings are held with Kids on the Move, an Early Intervention Services provider, to help with the transition between EI Services and Alpine SD Early Childhood Services.
- Transition specialists are available in every high school to help explain post-school options and services to parents.
- Parents reported seeing an improvement in special education services in the last three years.
- Special education files contained evidence of parent attendance and participation in eligibility and IEP meetings. Evidence was provided by parent signatures or documentation that parents participated by alternate means and from staff interviews and parent focus groups.
- Special education forms are available in Spanish. There was evidence of the use of forms in Spanish in some reviewed files. Some files contained evidence of interpreters attending meetings.
- Parents are provided with a Prior Written Notice of Refusal when appropriate.

- Alpine School District provides multiple opportunities for parent training and for parents to provide input regarding their students' education program.
- Special education files contain parent contact logs. Most reviewed files contained evidence that the log is used consistently.
- Parents reported that they receive frequent contact from teachers in person, by email, and phone.
- Parents stated that school staff district-wide were caring and committed towards their student. Parents also felt that the district was more open to their suggestions.
- Parents are surveyed for information regarding their student's needs as part of the evaluation and reevaluation process.
- Progress reports on student IEP goals were included in files; parents reported receiving them frequently.
- Signed consent for evaluation forms included in files and completed before evaluation began.
- Parents report receiving Procedural Safeguards.

Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

- Alpine SD provides a continuum of placement opportunities required by State and Federal Regulations for students with disabilities.
- Training is provided to LEAs and school teams to exhaust all options before recommending a more restrictive setting.
- Students with disabilities are provided opportunities to participate in general education classroom activities, as appropriate and as indicated on the IEP.
- Students with disabilities participate in statewide and district testing programs and will use alternative assessments (UAA) in an appropriate manner as per IEP team decision.
- Appropriate modifications and adaptations are indicated in the IEP.
- LEAs are trained annually by the Alpine SD Test Administrator about special education requirements regarding U-PASS and UAA.
- Suspension and expulsion data are easily available for district personnel for analysis and review.
- Staff development has been provided on the use of assessment data to improve instructional practice.
- Pay for paraeducators has been raised to improve Alpine SD's ability to hire and retain better-qualified Para educators.
- Title One schools receive additional district support to provide special education preschool students an equal opportunity to participate in the regular preschool.
- An LEA Manual has been developed which informs and supports building administrators who act as LEAs by explaining IDEA 2004 requirements.
- A New Teacher Manual was developed to support all teachers with compliance requirements, use of forms, and to help them perform the essential functions of their job.
- Biannual mandatory meetings are held at the district level for LEA/Administrative instruction and optional monthly training for Elementary/Secondary LEAs is provided for by the Alpine SD Special Education Dept.
- U-PASS page included with all reviewed IEPs.
- Temporary IEPs utilized for transfer students were reviewed and revised within timeline.
- Team membership includes all required team members, as well as additional team members such as school psychologists, speech language pathologists, OTs, PTs, and APE.
- Files contained evidence of data collection for academic work and behavior.
- Students with disabilities are provided with access to extra-curricular activities with their non-disabled peers.
- Files contained Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), when appropriate.
- School staff stated that accommodations were included in IEPs and provided in all classroom settings and testing situations. This was further documented during file reviews.
- School sites across the Alpine School District contained a continuum of special education services designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are included in all school settings and receive equitable classroom space.
- Special education files for students with severe disabilities contained well written, measurable goals and objectives.
- IEPs were current in most reviewed files. Initial IEPs were developed within 30 days of eligibility determination.

- Many schools provide after school programs for all students. Some schools provide peer tutors to support students with disabilities.
- IEPs documented special factors and Extended School Year (ESY) decisions.
- Classroom observations completed in general education and special education classes documented students with disabilities receiving accommodations as per IEP, such as paraphrasing, proximity control, extended time, preferential seating, calculator, and amplifier system, as well as specialized instruction.

Transitions

- Transition meetings are held 90 days before a child's third birthday between Kids on the Move and Alpine School District.
- Children are referred for further evaluations at the Early Childhood Assessment Center as needed.
- Alpine SD has two district Transition Specialists.
- There is a teacher located at ATEC who assists in the development and training of a district wide transition program for secondary resource students.
- There is a Transition Specialist at each high school in Alpine SD who assists teachers and parents in transition opportunities to prepare students for work sampling, skill training, and transition to post-high school services.
- Alpine SD collaborates with a variety of community and school-based programs, such as Head Start, Kids on the Move, Giant Steps, Utah State mental Hospital, Wasatch Mental Health, Tiny Tots, USDB, MATC, UVSC, etc.
- Parents are included in all transition meetings.
- Sheltered workshop employment and community-based supported work opportunities are available through ATEC as indicated on IEPs.
- Employment and other services are available for disabled adults at ATEC, providing a smooth transition from age 22 to adult services.
- Annual meetings are held with school counselors to collaborate on issues related to school credit, provide ongoing training, and answer questions.
- Transition meetings may be held separately from IEP meetings when students are transitioning from one school to another.
- ATEC and Alpine Summit had complete and appropriate transition plans included in student IEPs.
- Transition planning is beginning before the student's 16th birthday throughout Alpine School District.
- IEPs contained transition plans.
- Transition plans documented student preferences and interests.
- Special education files contained evidence of requesting ACT accommodations.
- Students expressed appreciation and fondness towards their teachers.
- Students reported being invited to attend IEP meetings.
- Student interests and preferences are documented in most transition plans.
- Transition Specialists are highly valued by the special education teachers and administrators at each site.
- Early Intervention and Preschool programs are collaborating to provide smooth transitions.
- Utah Preschool Outcomes Data (UPOD) forms were included in most preschool files.
- Files contained documentation of parents being informed of Part B Rights and Responsibilities.
- Early Intervention providers meet monthly with Preschool teachers to ensure that teachers have knowledge of student referrals.

Disproportionality

- Alpine SD has developed a referral process that protects ELL students from being over identified for special education services.
- Students were assessed in native language when appropriate.
- IPT scores were included in files and updated when needed.
- Alpine SD Special Education Dept. has developed a plan to review for disproportionality annually during school FTE determinations.

Areas of Systemic Noncompliance*

- ✓ Pre-Referral Interventions form did not document at least 2 classroom interventions failed, with supporting data.
- ✓ Timelines: Initial Evaluations were not completed within 60 days of receipt of parent consent; Reevaluation timelines exceeded; IEP and Placement not reviewed at least annually.
- ✓ Evaluation & Eligibility: Review of Existing Data form missing; students were not assessed in all areas related to suspected disability; eligibility Criteria not met for all disability categories due to evaluation procedures not followed; SLD eligibility determination did not include an observation in the regular classroom setting; SLD eligibility determination did not include the relevant behavior noted during the observation; SLD eligibility determination did not include the description of the instructional environment in which the observation took place.
- ✓ Notice of Meeting: Notice of Meeting for Eligibility, IEP, and Placement meetings missing or incomplete.
- ✓ IEP Content: IEP PLAAFP statements were missing baseline data; IEP PLAAFP statements did not address progress/involvement in the general curriculum; IEP did not contain measurable goals;
- ✓ 3 to 3 Transitions: Students did not have IEPs implemented by 3rd birthday.
- ✓ School to Post-School Transitions: Transition plans did not contain measurable goals based on age-appropriate assessments; Files lacked evidence of age appropriate transition assessments; Transition plans did not contain a course of study; IEP PLAAFP statements did not address transition strengths or needs.

*These areas represent items where the visiting team could not locate appropriate documentation of requirements of IDEA 2004 and Utah State Special Education Rules in student records or other data sources.