

**Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS)**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**  
**ACADEMY FOR MATH, ENGINEERING & SCIENCE (AMES)**  
**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 charter school and 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 AMES on February 20-21, 2007, included student record reviews, interviews with school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and classroom observations. 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 AMES.

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**

- AMES has provided professional development to all teachers regarding special education law and differentiation of curriculum.
- AMES has also created a system to inform and remind teachers of the goals, needs, and accommodations for each student receiving special education services.
- AMES has hired a program specialist to help with special education as well as ESL and Title I.
- AMES staff are committed to assisting students.
- There is an increasing awareness in the importance of the IEP process and on differentiation strategies for instruction.
- AMES utilizes inclusion to provide students with disabilities appropriate special education services.
- Counselors provide additional support to all students.
- AMES provides an opportunity for students to participate in concurrent enrollment classes at the University of Utah.
- Current forms are being used by AMES special education staff. All forms are in compliance with state special education requirements.
- Students with disabilities are fully included in all school curriculum and activities, as per IEP team decisions.
- Confidentiality is maintained through annual staff training and Record of Access forms included in all student special education files.
- Struggling students are discussed by a school team, who consider interventions and refer the student for evaluation for special education if determined necessary.
- Initial evaluations are conducted and completed within 60 days of receipt of parental consent.
- School staff members demonstrate a caring attitude towards all students, as shown through observation, parent statements, and student reports.
- Students with disabilities receive special education services following their IEP plan, in a continuum of settings.
- All school faculty receive ongoing professional development on differentiation of curriculum and providing accommodations for students with disabilities in their classroom.
- A variety of assessment tools were used during reevaluations.
- Evaluation Summary Reports included data from assessments and observations.
- Reevaluations were conducted within 3 year timeline.
- Regular education teachers are aware of students' goals and accommodations and are given suggestions for strategies designed to meet individual student needs.

- AMES provides numerous extra-curricular activity opportunities for all students.
- Internship opportunities, Saturday School, and Summer School are available for all students.
- Classroom and testing accommodations were included on IEPs. Paraeducators were observed providing additional support in the general education classroom. Students reported receiving classroom accommodations.

### **Parent Involvement**

- Parents are generally satisfied with the special education services provided by AMES.
- Parents have reported positive interaction with special and general education staff, as well as with administrators.
- Parents feel that their students are receiving appropriate special education services in the least restrictive environment.
- Parents feel that the special education staff responds to the needs of their students.
- Parent input is used to gather information related to student progress and involvement in the general curriculum and classroom, as documented in special education files and during parent focus group.
- Parents participate in Eligibility and IEP meetings as documented by their signatures and statements during the parent focus group.
- Notice of Meeting for parents for IEPs and Placement meetings were documented in special education files.
- Parents received Procedural Safeguards and copies of their student's IEP, as documented by signatures and statements during the parent focus group. Parents also stated that their Procedural Safeguards were explained to them during IEP meetings.
- IEPs included documentation of ongoing progress reports provided to parents on their student's IEP goals.
- Parents stated that teachers contact them regularly by e-mail and phone calls to discuss issues and concerns.
- Parents indicated that the school staff are not afraid to admit that they do not know the answers and are willing to explore possible solutions.
- Parents feel that many teachers provide differentiated instruction in the general education classroom.

### **Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment**

- Students with disabilities have access to all general curriculum with support, when needed, through the placement of paraeducators in the general education classrooms and directed studies periods.
- Students with disabilities have full access to all educational and extracurricular activities offered at AMES, including clubs, field trips, guest speakers, and when appropriate, classes offered by the University of Utah.
- AMES has worked with Serva-Bus to provide adequate transportation to students with disabilities.
- Full IEP teams attended and participated during IEP meetings, as documented by signatures, statements during parent focus group and student focus group, and staff interviews.
- IEPs are current and included in each reviewed file.
- IEPs were reviewed and revised at least annually and included a statement describing how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum and classroom.
- Placement was reviewed annually during IEP meetings.
- Present levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statements and annual goals were aligned.
- Students were invited to IEP meetings in person, by letter, and by e-mail. Students reported attending IEP meetings during the student focus group.
- Assessment accommodations were also included on IEP as supplemental aids and services.
- AMES school staff make an extra effort to keep students attending and being successful in school.
- AMES school team, including the parent, the student, and appropriate staff, meet to discuss student needs regarding academic or behavioral issues.
- The expectation at AMES is for all students to earn a regular high school diploma or GED.
- Student grades are available to students and parents on-line, allowing them to be reviewed frequently.
- U-PASS data is utilized for program development and planning by the school administrator, who also uses them to guide professional development for the faculty.
- AMES School Administration demonstrates strong knowledge and support for the special education program.

### **Transitions**

- AMES is using the CHOICES program to help students narrow down their interests and explore a variety of career choices.

- Special education staff is coordinating with the counseling center and Internship Coordinator to provide better transition planning for students with disabilities.
- Students complete internships during the 11<sup>th</sup> grade to gain a better understanding of careers and the demands of the workplace. Students reflect on their experience in a journal.
- All graduating seniors receiving special education services passed all three sections of the UBSCT exam.
- All students with disabilities who were seniors graduated last year.
- All juniors at AMES have passed the UBSCT.
- Students could describe their role in the IEP process and how it changes when they turn 18 years of age.
- AMES is beginning to work with Cottonwood High School to provide additional opportunities for interagency collaboration when planning for transition from school to post-school.
- Students are invited to the transition IEP meetings and feel that their interests are considered. This was documented in the IEP and reported during student focus groups.
- Parents reported discussing transition services during IEP meetings and SEOP meetings.
- Evidence of transition planning was included the IEPs.

### **Disproportionality**

- AMES has no ethnic group which over-represented as students with disabilities.
- Eligibility is discussed by the IEP team to ensure that all issues relating to eligibility are covered.
- AMES had 0 students with disabilities that were suspended for more than 10 school days during the 2005-2006 school year.

### **Areas of Systemic Noncompliance\***

- ✓ Evaluation & Eligibility: Review of Existing Data not documented prior to conducting a reevaluation; evaluation procedures not followed for students determined eligible as having an Emotional Disturbance (ED) or Specific Learning Disability (SLD); and student not assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability.
- ✓ Caseload limits for special education teachers exceeded.
- ✓ Consent from parents for evaluation not documented.
- ✓ Notice of Meeting not documented for Eligibility.
- ✓ IEPs did not include baseline data in the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statements.
- ✓ School to Post-School Transitions: Use of age-appropriate transition assessments is not documented in the IEP.

\*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.