

Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT
Noah Webster Academy
January 28, 2009

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 development of a Program Improvement Plan. The second phase, On-Site Validation, conducted at Noah Webster Academy on November 18, 2008 included student record reviews and school site visits. Parent surveys were also mailed to a small sample of parents.

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 personnel learned a great deal during the monitoring process. They gained greater understanding of the content of the files and why documentation is vital.
- The school IEP transfer policy and procedure was modified due to the LEA self-assessment.
- RtI (Response to Intervention) model was put in place to help in the areas of over-referral. The special education teacher and speech therapist created guidelines to help teachers recognize the difference between a development deficit and a disability that effects education.
- General education teachers report a strong collaborative effort between team members in the referral process.
- General education teachers seem to have a basic understanding of how to work as a team in creating an IEP.
- The special education teacher reports high satisfaction with the level of support and involvement of the administration.
- The special education teacher seems to have a firm understanding of the referral process, the evaluation and eligibility process, and the overall format and paperwork of IEP meetings.
- The speech therapist feels very involved in the IEP process; she is knowledgeable in the IEP referral and evaluation and eligibility process.
- School has a para-coordinator who conducts classroom observations and provides paraprofessional training two times each month on areas of concern.
- School provides after school activities (i.e., ballroom dancing, chess club, science club) which includes students with disabilities.
- The special education director is provided with time during each faculty meeting to discuss special education issues.
- An individual summary of student goals and present levels is provided at the beginning of the school year to relevant general education teachers.
- Special education staff is knowledgeable, caring, and actively tracking student progress towards IEP goals.

- Special education classrooms are located in the center of the school. The space designated for special education, as well as the entire school, is a welcoming and positive environment for all students.
- The referral process includes notification to general education teachers of students at-risk and includes a tracking system for intervention results. Interventions, as part of an RTI model, are attempted prior to referrals.
- Special education files were well organized, stored in a secure environment, and a posted access authorization list was observed.
- Class and school rules are posted throughout the school, including hallways.
- All students participate in a daily self-assessment regarding behavior.
- Eligibility requirements are documented within special education files. All eligibility determinations are current.
- Initial evaluations and reevaluations are completed within required timelines.
- Eligibility teams, which include all required team members, determine eligibility of students.
- Evaluations were sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the students' special education and related service needs.
- A variety of assessment tools and strategies were used to gather information used to determine eligibility.
- Students, when pulled out of general education classes for special education services, are not released during critical instruction time in the general education classroom.
- Evaluation results are summarized and provided to parents.
- Referrals are dealt with in a timely manner, as described by several school personnel.
- Professional development is provided to paraprofessionals working with students with disabilities.

Parent Involvement

- Parents were generally pleased with the special education services being provided by Noah Webster Academy.
- Parents feel they were able to give input during the IEP meeting.
- Parents are pleased with the amount of services being provided along with the accommodations being given in the general education setting.
- Parents feel that a strong collaboration effort between the general education and special education teachers is evident.
- Parental participation within the school was extremely high.
- Parents received progress reports for their child every quarter.
- The special education teacher writes thank-you notes to parents after each IEP which all participating team members sign. This has created a positive relationship between the school and parents.
- Parents have provided input concerning evaluation, eligibility, and IEP goals for their student.
- Parents described participating in frequent communication with school personnel via telephone, email, and in person visits.
- Parents, during the parent focus group, described attending mutually agreeable scheduled meetings, which were changed, as needed, to accommodate parent schedules.
- Parents were provided with information from the school to consider prior to IEP meetings.
- Parents described the special education department as organized, responsive to student needs, and collaborative with other school departments.
- Parents, during the parent focus group, stated that they were provided with copies of the IEP at the end of the IEP meeting.
- Parents are provided with Notice of Meetings with all required elements prior to meetings to discuss evaluation results, eligibility determination, IEP development, and placement.
- Special education teacher provided parents with relevant information from training and conferences attended by the teacher, as reported during the parent focus group.
- Prior written notice and copies are provided to parents when required and documented in special education files.
- Consent for evaluation, reevaluation, and placement was obtained from parents and documented in special education files.

- Parents are provided with Procedural Safeguards, as documented in special education files and statements during the parent focus group.
- Parents, during the parent focus group, stated that their students are making progress as a result of their special education and related services, which are provided within the least restrictive environment in conjunction with the general educational services provided throughout the school.
- Parents receive ongoing reports of student progress towards IEP goals, as documented in special education files.
- Progress reports were included in special education files.
- Parents appreciate school special education staff and para-educators.

Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

- Students are placed in the general education setting based upon the IEP team's decision and student need.
- All students have access to the general education curriculum and state core objectives with the necessary accommodations and/or services.
- Students who have behavioral difficulties that require interventions are placed on behavior intervention plans. BIPs are created by the IEP team with scaffolding and fading to allow for generalization into all areas of the school.
- School administrators were able to identify the need for professional development in the area of IEP participation and development.
- Special education teacher provides support to general education teachers to ensure students are able to participate in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible.
- Literacy specialist provides needed interventions before referring a student for special education services.
- Students participate in monthly assessments to determine student progress.
- Functional behavior assessments (FBA) and behavior intervention plans (BIP) contain all requirements with data on progress.
- IEPs were all current and included in student's special education files.
- Completed U-PASS addendum located in all special education files.
- Physical education is provided for all students enrolled at Noah Webster Academy, regardless of disability.
- Placement is determined by the IEP team based on the individual needs of the student.
- IEPs were complete and addressed special education and related services, special factors, extended school year, and placement.
- Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements included baseline/current data, as well as how the disability affects progress in the general curriculum.
- IEP goals were measurable and addressed all areas of need, as identified in the PLAAFP statement.
- Initial IEPs were developed within 30 days of eligibility determination.
- U-PASS results are reviewed by school staff and utilized to determine instructional changes needed school-wide.
- IEPs are developed by teams which include all required team members, as documented in special education files and parent statements during the parent focus group.
- IEPs describe how and when progress towards IEP goals will be measured and reported to parents.

Transitions

Noah Webster Academy does not have students of transition age at this time.

Disproportionality

- Parent's primary home language and student's race/ethnicity was documented in student files.

Areas of Systemic Noncompliance*

- Review of Existing Data not documented by team in 100% of applicable reviewed files.
- Evaluation procedures not followed in 14% of applicable reviewed files.
- Specific learning disabilities- observation not documented in 33% of applicable reviewed files.

**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.*