

**Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT
Washington County School District
September 10, 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 in Washington County School District on March 25-26, 2009 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

- School special education teams are collaborating with each other and with general education teachers.
- All Washington County School District IEP forms meet IDEA compliance requirements.
- Revamping the district website has helped to update and improve other special education "Helps and Guides."
- All Washington County School District (WCSD) child find policies and procedures meet USOE requirements.
- An updated evaluation tools inventory has been created which includes transition assessments.
- With regards to developing a systematic method of identification for students with specific learning disabilities, the special education district leadership team determined that it is best to maintain the discrepancy model, and has developed a flowchart as a means of professional development for the process.
- Research-based practices and data surrounding best practices for Response to Intervention (RtI) are being evaluated. As a result, the stakeholder team is developing a referral to special education form that incorporated the essential RtI data.
- The average caseload for mild/moderate teachers is 24 students.
- The special education department has been phasing into the "cone" organizational model.
- The roles of the District Leadership Team have been defined.
- WCSD has managed a shortage of related service staff by contracting out for OT and some SLP services and training and utilizing paraprofessional staff in the areas of motor services, speech and language services and behavioral supports.
- Private school surveys are conducted yearly, consultations and documentation are in compliance as per USOE-SES.
- Washington County School District turned in 100% of the required state reports on time. The information was found to be accurate and timely.
- Files were systematically selected and reviewed. Feedback was provided to each principal that was specific to each school.

- A standard screening and hiring process that ensures that the qualifications for hiring paraprofessionals are adhered to.
- A paraprofessional orientation and web-based training program has been implemented district-wide.
- Washington County School District has an excellent model for support for Early Years Enhancement (EYE) teachers and includes Alternative route to Licensure (ARL) teachers. Teachers receive on-site mentoring and a variety of staff development activities from monthly roundtable training to portfolio development.
- EYE/ARL and veteran teachers of students with severe disabilities are involved in monthly roundtable meetings.
- Professional development regarding improving services for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) has been the main focus for all professional development provided within the district.
- Information and support regarding compliance, caseloads, and the role of the LEA has been provided to building principals at monthly meetings.
- School psychologists assist teams in reviewing evaluation data and providing guidance as needed.
- Efforts to improve evaluation and eligibility being completed on time are being made through internal file reviews and tracking.
- As a guideline to assist staff with the eligibility criteria in each disability category, an "Evaluation Matrix" was developed and placed on the website as a reference.
- Training was provided to all stakeholders regarding evaluation and eligibility procedures.
- School psychologist provides parents and teachers with a summary of instructional strategies (based on evaluation data) to use with students.
- Files were contained in locking filing cabinets with access authorization lists posted and record of access included in each file.
- Washington County School District implements effective child find activities which include homeless shelters, Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT), collaboration with outside agencies, private schools, and health care providers.
- Annual training is provided to special education and related service providers and building principals on the Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules (USBE-SER) with updates through newsletters, roundtables, memos, and emails.
- Special education staff were interested in and receptive to suggestions for improvement, as documented by interviews of school staff.
- Positive school climate was observed in all visited schools.
- School district and school personnel utilize data to drive instruction. The district is reviewing the referral/Rtl process as a result of data collected.
- Washington County School District is mapping out special education programming needs based on federal and state requirements.
- Consistent file organization is utilized throughout the district which facilitated ease in reviewing files.
- Washington County School district is utilizing research-based interventions with at-risk students.
- Secondary school settings utilize peer tutors to provide additional support for students with disabilities.
- School staff describes supportive administrators in the school and at the district level.
- Student special education files document full team participation in the evaluation/eligibility team meeting.

Parent Involvement

- Procedural Safeguards are available on Washington County School District's website in a variety of languages.
- The bilingual examiner maintains a high level of support with Spanish speaking students with disabilities and their parents.

- A representative from the special education administration participated in a training titled “The IEP Process” sponsored by the Utah Parent Center.
- Several parents were included in discussions about the restructuring into “cones” and were informed that one of the goals was to provide better continuity of services.
- District staff is prompt in responding to calls and/or letters from parents.
- There is an improvement in communication on a district level, in a more welcoming environment which has equated to improved results and services for students.
- Documentation of interpreters at IEP meetings is included in student special education files.
- Progress reports on IEP goals are included in special education files.
- Documentation of parental involvement both in person and through the use of alternative means is included in student special education files.
- Washington County School District and the Family to Family Network collaborate to provide information and family support for students with disabilities.
- Most special education files contain documentation of attempts to involve parents.
- IEP meetings are scheduled at mutually agreeable times to meet parent needs, as reported by parents at the parent focus group.
- Parents reported that their students are making progress towards IEP goals.
- Parents report having the opportunity to provide input during their student’s evaluation.
- Consent for evaluation/reevaluation is included in 100% of applicable reviewed files.
- Written prior notice of evaluation/reevaluation, initial eligibility, and continuing eligibility is included in student special education files.
- If ESY is selected, written prior notice is given to parents regarding the goals, services, and amount of time included.

Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

- FAPE is consistently provided to students who have been removed for greater than 10 days in a school year.
- FAPE is provided to students either in the student’s neighborhood school or, in a few cases, the closest school with a teacher who is certified in teaching students with severe disabilities.
- Washington County School District has good participation rates on U-PASS testing for students with disabilities.
- Students with disabilities are making continuous yearly progress due to a recent emphasis on curriculum.
- K-12 general education teachers and students attend IEP meetings, as documented by signatures on IEPs.
- Students participate in review of existing evaluation data and eligibility determination meetings, as documented by signatures.
- Students indicated that they are invited to and attend IEP meetings.
- Individualized transportation plans are developed for students receiving specialized transportation.
- Extended School Year (ESY) plans were included in the IEP file when the student was determined eligible for ESY services.
- Placement decisions were generally made by a team.
- Initial IEPs are developed within thirty calendar days following eligibility determination.
- Initial placements were made as soon as possible following eligibility determination and as close as possible to the student’s home.
- All reviewed student special education files contained a current IEP.
- IEPs document the participation of a special education provider, an LEA representative, and an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation process.
- IEPs contain a statement of measurable annual goals.
- IEPs contain a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives for students participating in Utah’s Alternate Assessment (UAA).
- IEPs contain a description of how the student’s progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports on progress will be provided to parents.

- IEPs include a statement of supplementary aides and services to be provided to, or on behalf of the student when needed.
- IEPs include a statement of program supports or modifications that will be provided to the student as appropriate.
- Placement decisions are made by the IEP team and are appropriately made.

Transitions

3 to 3

Tremendous efforts have been made to improve 3 to 3 transition procedures within the district.

- The Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Coordinator actively coordinates with local early learning programs.
- The ECSE has an outstanding applied behavior analysis (ABA) program, providing early learners with improved skills for better success.
- Students are provided with a low student to teacher ratio in the preschool program.
- The preschool facilities provide a positive learning environment.
- All Early Intervention students had an IEP in place by their third birthday.
- The preschool staff is appreciative of administrative support from the district.
- The preschool has developed a fluid level system to assist students with more significant needs.
- Utah Preschool Outcomes Data (UPOD) forms are included in student files and complete.

School to Post School

- School to post-school transition is being addressed on the IEP for students age 16 and older.
- Continued collaboration with the Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) has been emphasized through orientations at each high school.
- A high percent (95%) of students were competitively employed and/or enrolled in some type of post-secondary program after graduating or exiting the district special education program.
- Evidence of increased efforts and improvement with implementing school to post school transition requirements evident.
- Annual IEP goals are designed to reasonably enable the student to meet the post secondary goals.
- Secondary transition plans include evidence of post-secondary training or education goals, employment goals, and independent living goals.
- IEPs document that post-secondary goals are based on age-appropriate transition assessments.

Disproportionality

- Washington County School District does not have any areas of over representation or under representation of ethnic or racial minority areas in any of the disability categories.
- Over classification does not appear to be an issue.
- Parent's primary home language is documented in all reviewed student special education files.

Areas of Systemic Noncompliance*

- Initial evaluation timelines were not met in 5% of applicable reviewed files.
- Reevaluation timelines were not met in 16% of applicable reviewed files.
- Review of existing evaluation data was not documented in 4% of applicable reviewed files.
- Evaluation was not sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the student's special education and related service needs in 11% of applicable reviewed files.
- Evaluation results were not summarized in 8% of applicable reviewed files.

- Documentation that a variety of assessment tools were used in determining eligibility missing in 2% of applicable reviewed files.
- Evaluation procedures were not followed in 33% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Developmental Delay
 - Documentation that the student has a significant delay missing in 17% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Emotional Disturbance
 - Documentation of at least three fifteen-minute observations missing in 33% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Complete documentation of the student's academic performance missing in 33% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Other Health Impairment
 - Documentation that multiple measures (formal and informal) were used to assess all areas of suspected deficits missing in 33% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Specific Learning Disability
 - Documentation that a severe discrepancy exists between the student's achievement and intellectual ability missing in 7% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Documentation of an observation of the student's academic performance and behavior areas of difficulty conducted missing in 13% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Documentation that the team prepared an evaluation/eligibility report of the results of the evaluation that included the relevant behavior noted during the observation of the student missing in 13% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Documentation of the student's performance on a standardized, norm-referenced, individually administered achievement measure in the area of the suspected disability missing in 7% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Documentation of a report that shows a significant discrepancy, based on a commercial software program missing in 13% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Speech/Language Impairment
 - Documentation that Speech/Language Impairment is the student's primary disability missing in 17% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Documentation that the student's disability adversely affects the student's educational performance missing in 17% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Documentation that the student requires special education and/or related services missing in 17% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Documentation that the student has a disorder in listening, reasoning and/or speaking to such a degree that special education is needed missing in 25% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Documentation that the student was evaluated by a qualified Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP) using assessment instruments and procedures that are appropriate for the determination of the speech impairment missing in 8% of applicable reviewed files.
 - Documentation that the team considered the potential effect of the speech impairment on phonological processing and phonemic awareness missing in 33% of applicable reviewed files.

- Documentation that procedural safeguards were provided to parents missing in 5% of applicable files.
- Notice of meeting did not include eligibility as a purpose in 13% of applicable reviewed files.
- Notice of meeting did not include IEP development as a purpose in 6% of applicable reviewed files.
- Notice of meeting did not include review of placement as a purpose in 20% of applicable reviewed files.
- No documentation that parents were given a copy of the evaluation summary report in 7% of applicable reviewed files.
- No documentation that parents were given a copy of eligibility determination in 2% of applicable reviewed files.
- Documentation that the parent was given a copy of the IEP was missing in 4% of applicable reviewed files.
- Consent for initial placement or change of placement was not documented in 9% of applicable reviewed files.
- Documentation that consent was obtained prior to inviting an outside agency representative to participate in the IEP meeting missing in 55% of applicable reviewed files.
- Prior written notice of implementation of the IEP was not documented in 2% of applicable reviewed files.
- Documentation of prior written notice of change in placement not provided in 4% of applicable reviewed files.
- Parent input during evaluation and eligibility process was not documented in 2% of applicable reviewed files.
- IEP timelines were not met in 26% of applicable reviewed files.
- Participation of the regular education teacher in the IEP meeting was not documented in 6% of applicable reviewed files.
- Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statements did not contain baseline data in 21% of applicable reviewed files.
- Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statements did not contain how the student's disability affects involvement/progress in 18% of applicable reviewed files.
- IEP goals did not address areas of need as identified in the PLAAFP in 2% of applicable reviewed files.
- Documentation of a statement of accommodations that are necessary for the student to participate on State and district-wide assessments missing in 11% of applicable reviewed files.
- Specific special education services were not documented in 2% of applicable reviewed files.
- Documentation that the team considered assistive technology devices/services for the student who without them would not benefit from special education missing in 2% of applicable reviewed files.
- Placement not reviewed or revised periodically, not less than annually in 22% of applicable reviewed files.
- The student of transition age was not invited to the IEP meeting in 7% of applicable reviewed files.
- Transition plans did not document transition services needed as follows:
 - Instruction 9%
 - Related services 9%
 - Community experiences 9%

- Transition plans did not document that an agency representative was invited to the IEP meeting 73% of applicable reviewed files.
- Transition plans did not include courses of study 18% of applicable reviewed files.
- One year prior to the student's 18th birthday, the student and parent were not notified of rights that transfer to the student at age of majority 9% 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.*