

Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT
UINTAH SCHOOL DISTRICT
May 25, 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 Uintah School District on April 19-20, 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 Anna LeFevre.

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

- Training of data collection team facilitated a positive interaction with teachers and the team members to review files in a non-threatening manner.
- Uintah School District is using a process for regular file monitoring in order to maintain and update district special education files.
- School level team leaders meet monthly to discuss new information and training. Those team leaders then relay information from the meetings to other staff members at their school.
- Uintah School District elementary principals have collaborated and developed a plan to improve student achievement.
- Schools use the CELL/XELL components for teaching reading.
- All special education teachers are being trained and encouraged to implement the same program with students with disabilities.
- Our special education teachers in grades 4-12 are also using the Language! Program to increase reading achievement.
- Some school principals take on a leadership role during IEP meetings, while others delegate that authority to their special education teachers.
- Uintah School District has hired additional special education teachers with severe endorsements to provide additional special education service options along the continuum.
- Files were well organized consistently throughout the school district.
- Special education files contained up-to-date information.
- Procedures were evident in each school to maintain confidentiality of student records, including posted Access Authorization lists, locked cabinets, and records of access form. UPIPS team members were asked repeated to sign Record of Access forms for each file they reviewed.
- Uintah School District Special Education Coordinator meets weekly with selected middle school staff to address any issues.
- Current forms that have been approved are in use at each visited school.
- School administrators were knowledgeable and involved in their special education programs.
- Elementary school principals are collaborating to create uniform curriculum and offer tiered instruction in their schools.
- Preschool special education service options have been increased through the addition of an early childhood classroom.
- K-5 schools are utilizing teacher assistance teams (TATs) to ensure classroom interventions occur prior to referral, which has resulted in a decreasing number of referrals for special education in those schools.

AIMS for Success is used to ensure that all areas are considered and determined if area of need for each student.

- All school staff discussed reviewing data from interventions before referrals and/or evaluation.
- Child Find procedures are in place district-wide and address students from 0-21 years of age in multiple settings, such as private schools, charter schools, and homeless shelters. There is ongoing coordination with Early Intervention and local physicians, annual staff training at each school, and parent notification through the student handbook.
- Special education teachers are included in school-based professional developments in areas such as Cell/Xell, literacy, and developing professional learning communities.
- Preschool paraeducators attend all preschool trainings. Some paraprofessionals and teachers needing additional training are seeking a Child Development Associate Certificate.
- School psychologist and evaluators ensure that evaluation reports describe results and recommendations and concede that eligibility is a team decision.
- Evaluation Summary Reports are complete, include data from each evaluation, and document areas that are not concerns.
- Some elementary and junior high school sites invite students to attend and participate in their IEPs.
- Referral forms were included in special education files.
- Evaluations included the use of a variety of assessments.
- Students with disabilities participate in all school activities with their general education peers.
- Initial evaluations included documentation of why the 60 day timeline was exceeded (in both cases it was exceeded due to parent needs/requests).

Parent Involvement

- Overall, parents are pleased with their child's special education program.
- Parents are receiving prior written notice, copies and procedural safeguards.
- Parents report receiving progress reports on their students' IEP goals.
- Parents feel that special education teachers make a difference in their child's education.
- Parents stated that the special education teachers care about their child.
- Information from parents is documented on Evaluation Summary Reports.
- Parent information is sought out and included in eligibility documents.
- Parents are invited to attend meetings multiple times, if needed.
- When parents attend meetings by alternate means, the file contained documentation that the parents received a copy of the materials.
- Parent signatures were included on most IEPs and eligibility determinations. When the signature was missing, the file contained evidence of multiple notice of scheduled meetings.
- Vernal Junior High and West Middle School provide parents with weekly progress reports on IEP goals. Data and anecdotal records are included in the reports.
- Parents described methods and amount of contact from school and were willing to seek out additional contact opportunities as needed.
- Notice of Meetings were included in files, usually complete, for all meetings.
- Prior Written Notice is provided to parents prior to actions taken by the district regarding evaluation, eligibility, and IEP content and documented in the special education file.
- Principals described inviting parents to select trainings at their schools.
- Parents felt that special education teachers were informed and truly cared about their students.

Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

- A large majority of students with disabilities are attending their neighborhood school and participating in all school related activities of their choice.
- Uintah School District has an improved continuum of placement options for students with disabilities.
- There is better communication and service for students with disabilities in private schools.
- Special education teachers understand rules, procedures, and service delivery options for students with disabilities.
- Students report receiving specialized instruction helping them at school and would recommend the program to friends who are struggling at school.
- Uintah School District has decreased suspensions of 10 days or more from 2005-2006 suspension rates.
- West Middle School and Uintah High School staff use technology to provide accommodations to students; examples of which are FM systems in classrooms, Smart Boards, and audio textbooks available on-line.

- Elementary school special education teachers are including progress monitoring data in IEPs.
- IEPs were reviewed and revised at least annually.
- IEP teams addressed and documented the consideration of special factors and specific special education and related services.
- IEPs contained measurable annual goals.
- Several schools have peer tutoring programs to provide additional opportunities for students with disabilities to interact with peers.

Transitions

- Age 3-5 programs are being provided through the district preschool programs.
- The Uintah School District preschool actively coordinates with the Early Intervention and Head Start programs. There are district special education staff in the Head Start programs to provide services to students with disabilities.
- Uintah School District has a transition facilitator who attends state transition roundtables and disseminates the information.
- High school special education teachers provide job-sampling activities for students.
- District has a work based training program for students.
- Excellent coordination between EI and preschool
- IFSP's are in files and are being considered. Have added to the referral form to document that procedural safeguards are given to parents at time of transition.
- 100% of files reviewed had IEP in place by the child's third birthday.
- IEP transition plans were in appropriate folders.
- Use of transition assessment was documented in some transition areas.
- Community based programs are used.
- Evidence that consent was obtained to invite agency representatives to the IEP was included in special education files.

Disproportionality

- Increase of level A service compared to past years.
- Decrease of level C students compared to previous years.
- Decrease in students being considered eligible for special education services.
- Primary home language other than English (PHLOTE) documented in files.

Areas of Systemic Noncompliance*

- ✓ Initial evaluation not completed within 60 days of receipt of parent consent.
- ✓ Evaluation procedures not followed for disability categories of ED, MD, OHI, and SLD.
- ✓ Students were not assessed in all areas of concern.
- ✓ School to Post-School Transition: Age appropriate transition assessments not documented; PLAAFP statements did not address transition strengths and needs; Transition plans did not include a course of study needed to assist the student in reaching long-range post secondary outcomes; Notice of transfer of rights at Age of Majority (not later than one year before 18th birthday) not documented.

*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.