New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 62

Susan D. Hollins, Superintendent
Thomas DeBalsi, Special Education Director

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Visit Conducted on:
November 9 and 10, 1998

Team Members: Maryclare Heffernan, Chairperson
Theo Denoncour
Terra Geer
Joy Hutchins
Bonnie Jewell
Lori Krueger
Elizabeth Kuhlmann

New Hampshire Special Education
Program Approval Report

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(Commendations, Citations and Suggestions for each school)

Note: It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.

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Program Approval Report

SAU 62

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted at SAU 62 comprised of the following schools: Canaan Elementary School, Enfield Elementary School, Indian River School and Mascoma Valley Regional High School. The visiting team met on November 9 and 10, 1998 in order to review the status of Special Education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data, and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the special education director, building principals, regular and special education teachers and related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via phone. Throughout the visit the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the N.H. State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: Conducted on December 7 and 8, 1993

There were no district wide patterns of non-compliance found during the previous visit. A review of the report submitted at that time indicates that efforts had been made to implement an inclusionary philosophy of programming and that administrators and staff shared a commitment toward providing education for all students in the least restrictive setting possible.

The individual school citations were seen to be mainly a result of "housekeeping" errors and were not found to represent a system wide pattern of procedural oversight. They were encouraged to monitor those minor oversights and errors discovered during the visit.

Since the 1993 visit, SAU 62 has adopted a district wide policy that addresses NH Standards and Regulations relating to all special education procedures. They have also recently begun to address the implementation of procedures in response to the Re-Authorized IDEA 1997. The external team saw evidence of these efforts throughout the recent program approval visit. However, there continues to be a pattern of non-compliance in several areas related to basic procedure. Tthe district should review the need to offer ongoing staff development opportunities to all staff in an effort to bring them up to date on current state and federal standards relating to special education.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

SAU 62 continues to work toward a model of inclusion for all its students. In each program there is evidence of successful practices in curriculum modifications and student support through a continuum of services. The district is commended for its efforts in this important area. There are, however, several issues that appear to have an impact on maintaining consistency in procedural areas. The SAU has experienced staff turnover resulting in a relatively high number of new and inexperienced staff in some programs. The ability to attract and keep certified staff is a critical factor in both maintaining procedural consistency and in the continued development of quality programming for all students. This visiting team found areas of noncompliance that appear related to these issues. The current staff are hardworking and professional in their behavior and are commended for the high degree of interest and willingness to seek inservice training and supervision.

The Enfield Elementary School is not handicapped accessible and should be renovated to accommodate basic accessibility requirements. The School Board and school district administration are working on proposals to address the significant building needs. They are strongly encouraged to continue with these efforts.

The visiting team found evidence of strong leadership at the district and building levels. They were particularly impressed with the district leadership and creative thinking in such programs as Distance Learning, a technology available to extend the curriculum offerings at the High School level; with other implications for staff training and college course work as well. This community, without a wealth of resources, is working to seek solutions for future program growth in innovative and collaborative ways. They are commended for their efforts in these areas.

The issues of inservice training throughout the SAU to address all aspects of educational programming, including but not limited to special education programming, are important ones. Staff expressed interest in participating in ongoing training and particularly where there are a number of new staff, training is recommended.

An SAU wide pattern is found in that the SEE/PT teams are not consistently meeting multidisciplanary criteria. The SAU is encouraged to continue seeking special education staff certified in the various areas of disabilites.

The ability to provide comprehensive services is dependent upon the staff's ability to meet and discuss programming issues and specific student needs. There appears to be a need to review all possibilities related to creating common meeting times for special and general education staff so that communication can take place on a regular basis. Further, there appears to be a real need to offer inservice training to paraprofessional staff so that all staff share a basic understanding of special education issues.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The SAU is commended for the leadership at the district and building levels. The commitment to the ongoing development of quality programming is impressive.
- The Special Education Director is commended for his efforts to create a district wide philosophy and implementation of special education programming, and for his regular meetings with staff.
- The district is commended for their efforts to provide a full continuum of special education services to all students.
- The district is commended for their focus on the development of reading programs.
- The district is commended for the efforts made in the area of staff development.
- The SAU is commended for its efforts in maintaining good communication with the community at large through their newsletter.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed#1119.06(d)	The physical space at the Enfield Elementary School,sed for instructional programming for students with special education needs, is not of sufficient size to implement the student's individual education program and provide for all other necessary learning.
Ed#1119.08	The school board shall ensure that all students with disabilities have equal opportunity to complete a course of studies leading to a high school diploma.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The district should continue to work with the school board to create solutions to the present building needs at the Enfield Elementary School.
- The district should consider a district wide committee to plan for inservice training needs of all staff within the SAU.
- The School Board should develop and adopt a diploma policy for all the SAU's high school students.
- The SAU is encouraged to continue to develop curriculum that aligns with the New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks.

ENFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: Resource Room, Modified Inclusionary program (Grades 1 and 2)

COMMENDATIONS:

- The Enfield teachers and staff are committed to the inclusion model and take ownership for the programming of all children.
- The school principal is supportive of the special education model and instrumental in working with the staff to create the warm, positive school environment found at the school.
- There appears to be a strong positive relationship between general education and special education staff.
- The Speech and Language model in place at the Enfield Elementary School appears to be working well.
- The files are well organized and the special education forms are comprehensive.
- There is a strong positive parent involvement at the school.

CITATIONS:

Ed#1107.02(b) 2 files: There is no evidence of notification sent to parents following a referral.

Ed#1107.03(a) 1 file: The evaluation team does not meet multidisciplinary criteria.

Ed#1107.05(k) 1 file: The evaluation process was not completed within 45 days.

Ed#1107.07(c)3 2 files: No LEA representative identified at meeting.

Ed#1107.08(d) 1 file: All team members did not sign the written evaluation report.

Ed#1115.06 1 file: There is no evidence that LRE is determined.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The Enfield Elementary School is not handicapped accessible. The district is in the process of addressing the accessibility and space needs. The visiting team saw a significant need to make renovations to the school building in order to provide appropriate work and learning spaces and insure an accessible building for the towns students, parents, staff and other visitors. The team strongly encourages the continued efforts toward building improvement.

- There is a need for teachers and paraprofessional staff to meet to plan and communicate. A suggestion is made that the staff work toward the development of a regular communication and planning time.

- Ongoing inservice training to address inclusionary practices for all staff is recommended.

- Encourage more participation of general education teachers in the development of IEP's.

CANAAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: Resource Room, Inclusionary Program, Emotionally Disturbed Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- There appears to be good communication between general and special education staff.
- The Reading Program offered through the Resource Room is consistent, well recorded and effective.
- The special education programs are given the space to accommodate a range of student needs. The spaces utilized are bright and cheerful.
- The pre-referral team is effective.
- There is a positive atmosphere in the building.

CITATIONS:

Ed#1107.05(k) 1 file: The evaluation was not completed within 45 days.

Ed#1109.04(a) 2 files: No evidence that parents were provided with 10 day written notice of IEP meeting.

Ed#1111.01 1 file: Extended School Year was not considered prior to 4/30.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Work to design better opportunities for general education teachers to participate in the development of IEP's.
- Create a clear plan to communicate with and offer supervision of paraprofessional staff.
- The inclusion of the students with emotional disabilities in the general education setting appears to have a disruptive effect on the classroom at times. Suggestion is made to review and reevaluate the process of including disabled students in the classroom and to determine the effectiveness of the current model. More in-class support may be appropriate.
- Consistent use of district forms, along with inservice training to address the reauthorization of IDEA, should assist in improving procedural inaccuracies.

INDIAN RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: Resource Room, Modified Regular Program, Behavioral Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- The Middle School staff has well maintained files and concise, complete district forms.
- General education and special education teachers meet often to share information.
- Teachers all seem dedicated to the students.
- The Behavior Program seems to meet the diverse needs of the students.
- The special education study hall appears to be a valuable support.
- Paraprofessional support in the classrooms was evident.

CITATIONS:

Ed#1107.03(a)	2 files: The evaluation team did not meet multidisciplinary criteria.
Ed#1107.05(k)	2 files: Evaluations were not completed within 45 days; no extensions signed.
Ed#1107.07(c)	2 files: The SEE/PT did not include a person certified in the area of suspected disability.
Ed#1107.07(c)3	1 file: No LEA representative identified at meeting.
Ed#1107.08(C)	1 file: No observation found in file.
Ed#1109.01(I)	1 file: No evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of IEP.
Ed#1125.04(a) 1-2	1 file: No written consent to evaluate in file.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Provide inservice training to all staff on the integration of special services within the general classroom.
- Review staffing patterns at the Middle School to determine if an additional special educator is needed to address the issue of coverage for the seventh and eighth grade teams.
- Provide Inservice training for paraprofessional staff on special education issues.
- Consider a regular system of communication with special education paraprofessional staff to improve communication related to instruction and general information.
- Review the process of taking students out of Unified Arts classes to attend the special education study halls to determine if there are any other alternatives available.
- Provide training on special education procedure to insure the areas of non-compliance are addressed.

MASCOMA VALLEY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: Modified Inclusionary Program, Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- There appears to be excellent support between general and special education staff, moral is good. There is a willingness of all parties to work together to create appropriate instructional strategies for all students.
- Modifications and materials are made available for general education staff.
- The pre-referral process is a good one, with all members aware of their roles.
- The follow-up information gathering, done after a referral has been made and acted on, is an excellent way of organizing student history and data.
- The files are well organized.
- The Middle School to the High School transition plan works well for students.
- Staff expressed an interest in receiving further training in special education issues.
- There is a good system of communication in place through the use of "blue slips".
- There appears to be good coordination with HACTC (VIEP's, etc.)
- There is a sense of collaboration among all staff.

CITATIONS:

Ed#1107.03(a) 1 file: Evaluation team did not meet multidisciplinary criteria.

Ed#1107.07(c) 1 file: The SEE/PT evaluation team did not identify members present.

Ed#1107.08(a) 1 file: SEE/PT evaluation team did not include a regular education teacher.

Ed#1107.08(c) 1 file: There is no complete observation. (A summary does exist)

Ed#1131.01 and Ed#1131.02 2 files: Students are on a waiting list for vocational evaluations. No vocational evaluation information available to become a component on the IEP.

Ed#1109.0 (d) 2 files: IEP's do not include statement of expectation in regular class participation.

Ed#1102.35 2 files: No transition statements found in records.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Provide inservice training to all staff to address issues of all special education procedures, particularly in areas of present non-compliance.
- Clarify the role of the general educator on IEP teams.

MASCOMA VALLEY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, Con't.

- Review staffing patterns in the special education department to determine if staff allocated is appropriate for the caseloads and range of disabilities.

- Provide training specific to the educational needs of more significantly impaired students in an inclusionary setting.

- Create more opportunities for communication among general education and special education staff in an effort to share information about student progress and program needs and to create mutual decisions on services to be delivered.

- Review the technology available to all staff and students and consider the need for more computers in the classrooms.

- Develop a process to facilitate manifestation determinations.

PRE-SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: Preschool

COMMENDATIONS:

- The model of using community based pre-school sites to service students with special education needs is an effective inclusionary approach.
- The pre-school coordinator makes regular visits for communication and monitoring purposes at each pre-school site.
- The related services provided to pre-school students are offered on site and integrated into the program.

CITATIONS:

Ed#1107.07 (3) 1 file: LEA representative is not identified.

SUGGESTIONS

- Offer inservice training related to current trends in pre-school programming to all relevant staff.
- Consider the development of a district-wide preschool team that would be available to do complete diagnostic and prescriptive teamwork.
- Review Child find process and activities and determine if any revisions to this process are warranted at this time.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU 62

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

ADDENDUM
JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU 62

 # OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 Files

CITATIONS:

Ed#1107.03 (a)	2 files: Special Education Evaluation Teams did not include teacher in the area of suspected disability.
Ed#1107.07 (c)	2 files: Team determining disabilities not fully complete.
Ed#1113.01	1 file: No vocational evaluation present in file.
Ed#1109.01(b)	1 file: No annual goals and short-term objectives for counseling.
Ed#1109.01(j)	1 file: IEP does not include individuals or service providers responsible for implementation.
Ed#1109.01(l)	1 file: Statement of transition missing.
Ed#1109.01(n)	1 file: IEP not signed.
Ed#1109.03	1 file: Teacher not present at IEP meeting.
Ed#1109.11	1 file: No evidence of monitoring of IEP.
Ed#1111.01	1 file: No evidence that ESY was considered.

SUGGESTIONS:

- SAU 62 should take a more proactive approach to ensure the accurate completion of the evaluation, placement and IEP process for students who by court ordered are placed out-of-district. Every effort should be made to guarantee that all special education procedures are accurately competed in each case.