

August 17, 2001

Dr. Mary Ford  
State Director of Special Education  
New Hampshire Department of Education  
101 Pleasant Street  
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Mary,

Enclosed please find the summary report for oversight of the 2000-2001 NHDOE Special Education Program Approval Process. This summary includes a synopsis of activities conducted by the SERESC management team in their collaborative work with the NHDOE in the oversight of Special Education Monitoring and Improvement Process (SPEDMIP) and traditional compliance reviews.

I am pleased to report that the NHDOE has made tremendous progress in recent years with efforts to develop a special education program approval model that drives and supports improved results for children and youth with disabilities. I believe you will find evidence of this work in the document that follows. You will also note that the NHDOE Special Education Approval Process is at a turning point. We have made significant strides within NH schools in measuring compliance with state and federal special education regulations. In 1995 the NHDOE introduced a new and exciting method of evaluating and measuring compliance that merged with program improvement. This model called "*The Special Education Monitoring and Improvement Process (SPEDMIP)*" has proven to be successful for those NH educational communities that have pursued this improvement model. We are now at a point where we are ready to work with the NHDOE and move ahead in refining and expanding existing materials and data collection activities of the program approval process.

The willingness of the New Department of Education to conduct the program approval process in supportive and innovate ways has strengthened relationships with educational communities in both private and public school systems. As we venture into new territory and begin improvement of the program approval process, many wonderful aspects of the SPEDMIP model will be brought forward. Using those as a base, we will be open to new approaches based on current research and will modify materials to strengthen and enhance our work with NH educational communities.

In beginning the 2001-2002 school year, the management team welcomes your involvement and participation. Your input, feedback and expertise will be invaluable to our work. We look forward to our continued work with the NHDOE and congratulate you in your new role as Special Education Bureau Administrator. Your knowledge and skills will be a valuable asset to the work of Special Education Program Approval Process and to the state of New Hampshire. If you have any questions or need further clarification regarding this summary report or the Special Education Program Approval Process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu  
Administrator, Special Education Program Approval Process

Cc: Dr. J. Baker, S. Izard - NHDOE  
SERESC Management Team

**NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
BUREAU OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL  
2000-2001 YEAR END REPORT**

**Special Education Monitoring and Improvement Process  
And  
Traditional Compliance Reviews**

**Submitted by:**

**Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu,  
Project Administrator  
SERESC**

August 17, 2001

# **NHDOE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS YEAR END SUMMARY 2000-2001**

**August 2, 2001**

## **INTRODUCITON**

The 2000-2001 school year has concluded and the Southeastern Regional Education Service Center (SERESC) has completed its eleventh year of working collaboratively with the NHDOE in the oversight and coordination of the Special Education Program Approval Process. This year has truly been an active one, filled with many accomplishments for the NHDOE, the Special Education Program Approval management team, participating New Hampshire school districts and private special education schools, and ultimately New Hampshire students with disabilities. As the project administrator for the NHDOE Program Approval Process, I am pleased to offer this year-end summary. In this report I will attempt to:

- Highlight the year, particularly services provided to all the constituents involved
- Summarize NHDOE Special Education Program Approval activities
- Summarize goals for the future
- Take a critical look at suggestions for improvement

## **PRESCHOOL**

A key focus of the NHDOE Special Education Program Approval Process during the past year was to increase our capacity to provide support, technical assistance and consistent compliance reviews in the area of preschool education. During the 2000-2001 program year we have worked hard to conduct comprehensive reviews of all NHDOE special education approved preschool programs that enroll young children with disabilities. Our endeavors to improve the review of preschool programs included the participation of preschool educators on our review teams.

The management team has also been very fortunate to include Leigh Zoellick as a member of our program approval management team. Leigh was recruited by Ruth Littlefield, Education Consultant at the NHDOE because of her expertise and experience in the area of early childhood education. Leigh's participation in a variety of program approval activities has been successful in many ways, including assisting in the design of program approval documents, building the capacity of local school districts to better understand their responsibilities for preschool education, and in disseminating essential preschool information. The support and technical assistance she has offered the program approval management team and preschool programs is invaluable and will have a lasting impact.

## **INVOLVEMENT IN FEDERAL MONITORING**

As the NHDOE participated in the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Improvement Monitoring Process, (CIMP) a representative of the Special Education Program Approval management team was actively involved. Maryclare Heffernan represented the management team at all required cluster group meetings and assisted the NHDOE in compiling information for their final report. The management team found this to be a tremendous learning experience and welcomed the opportunity to be involved with other practitioners and various stakeholders in the field of special education. The management team looks forward to being involved in the next phase of setting goals for program improvement.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF SPEDMIP IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

Through the efforts of the NHDOE, the management team was once again able to offer technical assistance and starter funds to each 1999-2000 SPEDMIP site for the implementation of their program improvement plans. The role of the management team in this effort was to provide technical assistance, guidance and support to the

LEAs and private schools as they began implementing improvement goals outlined in their final reports. Clearly, the SPEDMIP process has been successful in assisting districts and private special education programs with improvement planning that address critical issues related to children and youth with disabilities. While many sites have a distance to go before attaining all of their improvement goals, most have forged ahead and begun to demonstrate progress in a variety of ways. Improvement funds were directed toward a variety of professional development opportunities in areas such as curriculum development, integration of curriculum across content areas, team building, communication skills and the design of instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Special Education Program Approval management team places a high priority on professional development. In keeping with the NHDOE's statewide leadership and coordination to implement effective professional development, the management continues to provide such opportunities through both formal and informal offerings. At all times the management team designs professional development activities based on both content and process, and information that is consistent with solid research findings.

In the fall of the 2000-2001 school year, the management team provided an IDEA Team training and a facilitator training session. Two additional facilitator networking sessions were also held. Also in the fall of 2000, the NHDOE and the management team also collaborated on a presentation at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Best Practices in Special and Regular Education Conference. In the spring of 2001, the management team worked collaboratively with the NHDOE in conducting three SPEDMIP orientation sessions to build awareness for private schools and LEA's of the NHDOE Special Education Program Approval Process and options available. The management team also conducted focus group sessions with prior participants of the SPEDMIP process to gather their input regarding the process and suggestions for improvement.

In addition to program approval professional development offerings, the management team has been responsible for training visiting team members and IDEA Teams in a variety of areas that include but are not limited to: data collection and use of data for program improvement, conducting case studies, compliance with state and federal special education regulations, and requirements of master professional development plans. Other areas of support or training included preschool program development, conducting focus groups on various topics, providing general technical assistance related to other NHDOE initiatives such as NHEIAP, Best Schools Initiative, the NH Curriculum Frameworks, the NH State Minimum Curriculum Requirements and the newly revised professional development requirements for re-certification.

### **CORRECTIVE ACTION VISITS**

During the 2000-2001 school year the management team conducted 27 corrective action visits to review the status of areas of noncompliance identified in the 1999-2000 program approval reports. In conducting these visits it was apparent that LEA's and private schools welcome the opportunity to document their progress and the successes within their programs. In addition, the follow up visits gave the management team an opportunity to provide technical assistance and network with practitioners in the field, and with others around the state working on similar issues.

### **REQUESTS FOR APPROVAL OF NEW PROGRAMS AND NEW SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS**

During the 2000-2001 school year the management team was responsible for working collaboratively with the NHDOE in the review of 29 requests for approval of new programs or newly formed private special education schools. As part of this work, the management team was also responsible for the review of all requests for changes to existing programs, as well as providing technical assistance to individuals and organizations considering the development of special education programs. To ensure that all program requirements and regulations are met, the management team is responsible for the review of all application materials, including policies and procedures, curriculum, facility requirements and personnel qualifications.

## **ONGOING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SAU # 33 RAYMOND AND SAU # 64 MILTON**

At this writing the management team has concluded it's first year of ongoing technical assistance with both the Raymond and Milton School Districts. As part of the management team's workscope, monthly technical assistance was provided to the school districts to assist them in setting goals to address issues of noncompliance, legal requirements for ensuring compliance in a manner that fosters continuous program improvement and improved student performance. A separate year-end summary for each of these districts has been compiled and will be sent to the New Hampshire Department of Education under separate cover.

## **THE SPEDMIP WEBSITE**

As in previous years, SERESC is responsible for working with the NHDOE and IDEA Teams in the oversight and management of the SPEDMIP Website. An overview of the process is included on the website and all relevant information related for each site that participated in the SPEDMIP Process each year.

## **MONTHLY MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETINGS**

The management team recognizes the importance in engaging in ongoing communication and in the strong connection with the NHDOE. As such, the management team meets on a monthly basis and welcomes the participation of Susan Izard from the NHDOE to ensure a true exchange of ideas, suggestions and relevant information. This practice has proven to be invaluable and essential to effective program management.

## **SHELTER CARE VISITS**

During the 2000-2001 school year, the management team worked collaboratively with the NHDOE in conducting special education compliance reviews of the four shelter care facilities in New Hampshire. Based on these visits, it became apparent that the facilities struggle with providing access to the general curriculum; equal educational opportunities as outlined in the NH State Minimum Curriculum Requirements and with recruiting and maintaining qualified staff, related service personnel and consultation. As such, the NHDOE has determined that these programs will be reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure compliance with state and federal special education regulations. At this writing, the NHDOE, through SERESC, has been contacted for application materials for a new shelter care facility that will be located in Claremont, NH and overseen by Odyssey School, Inc.

## **COLLEGE CONNECTION ACTIVITIES**

To assist the NHDOE in the establishment of preparation of preservice and graduate students in the field of special education, the management team sought out students at Notre Dame College to serve on visiting teams. As part of this effort, the management team met with college department chairpersons, conducted an orientation session with students and provided the opportunity for students to participate in program approval activities as part of their course work. This endeavor was met with minimal success, as few students volunteered to participate. In an effort to increase activity in the aspect of the program approval process, it was decided to pursue this opportunity with Rivier College for the 2001-2002 school year.

## **NATIONAL STUDY OF SCHOOL EVALUATION (NSSE)**

As part of the work of the Special Education Program Approval management team, the NHDOE sponsored a briefing session on the NSSE "School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance" process. The NHDOE has further requested that the management team pilot the NSSE materials with three sites during the 2001-2002 school year. The work with the pilot sites will be to provide a comprehensive model for data driven, research based school improvement planning that reviews all programs and initiatives, rather than focusing only on programs and services for students with disabilities. This initiative came as a result of several focus groups conducted statewide regarding the SPEDMIP process. The clear message from constituents was that while the results of SPEDMIP was valuable, it could be redesigned to support the work of all programs, as the majority of NH students with disabilities are receiving services within the general curriculum. The management team, along with the three pilot sites, SAU 17, SAU 56 and RSEC (Regional Services & Education Center), look forward to this exciting journey as we work to begin implementing this process that offers continuous program improvement for all students.

## **MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERSHIP**

In addition to the many accomplishments of the Special Education Program Approval management team, members undertook the challenge of recruiting and hiring an additional part-time team member for the 2000-2001 school year. I am delighted to reflect upon the good fortune and privilege of including Dr. Richard Lates to the management team. His knowledge of general curriculum, data collection, professional development, education law and team building has been a wonderful addition to the team.

I am also very pleased to report that Susan Izard, Education Consultant at the NHDOE has also joined our team. Susan has been a wonderful asset and a great contributor to our team as she provides leadership from the NHDOE. Her willingness to confront challenges, undertake complex situations and support sustained change has been very encouraging. She brings a confirmation to the team's work and confidence that we are headed in the right direction.

## **OTHER PERTINENT DATA FOR THE 2000-2001 SCHOOL YEAR**

- 6 SAU'S and/or Private Schools participated in SPEDMIP
- 19 SAU'S and/or Private Schools participated in Traditional Compliance Reviews
- 25 JAMES O' Compliance Reviews were conducted
- 22 Audit Visits were conducted
- 3 Shelter Care Visits Were Conducted
- 29 Requests for Approval of new programs or change programs were processed
- Over 200 practitioners from the field volunteered their time, expertise and knowledge to serve on review teams and assist in a variety of program approval activities.

## **FUTURE GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT: LOOKING AHEAD**

As reflected in the summary above, the special education program approval management team has been working hard over the past year to provide quality services to the NHDOE, NH school districts and private special education schools. As we begin this new school year with a shift from current ways of thinking and working with a new model and revised materials, we recognize the need for ongoing improvement. The special education program approval management team is sincerely committed to strengthening the effectiveness, efficiency and coordination of the Special Education Program Approval Process. Toward this goal, our work has moved rapidly beyond scrutiny for compliance with state and federal special education regulations. The focus of our future work is more centered on student outcomes and continuous program improvement for all students. We have learned a tremendous amount over the last several years and begin the current program year with certainty of our direction. We realize, however, that we must always be open to new ideas and growth. While we are pleased with our accomplishments, it is important to continue to identify our goals for improvement. Our immediate goals are:

1. To pilot National Study for School Evaluation materials with three sites to determine how the model might be best incorporated into various NHDOE Program approval programs.
2. To revise the current program approval materials to reflect the newly adopted special education regulations and more closely align with current research as it relates to continuous program improvement.
3. To continue to strengthen the "preschool connection" in all aspects of program approval activities.
4. To improve the use of SPEDIS data within the program approval process.
5. To continue to explore the best ways to strengthen the alignment of the Special Education Approval Process with all other district initiatives, such as Best Schools, State Improvement Grant, NHEAIP, Master Professional Development Plans, the NH Curriculum Frameworks and Local Educational Improvement Plans.
6. To strengthen connections with DCYF in the review of private special education facilities.
7. To explore and discuss ways in which the NHDOE Special Education Approval Process can be connected with our state college pre-service and graduate students as part of their course work.
8. To improve our work with IDEA teams in becoming more effective with data analysis, communicating the meaning of data and maximizing the use of data for continuous program improvement.

## **SUMMARY**

Over the past eleven years, SERESC has worked collaboratively with the NHDOE, school districts, private special education schools, parents and other key stakeholders to help shape the Special Education Program Approval process. Our work has evolved from a process of verification of compliance to a model driven by accountability in a way that supports improved results for all students, including those with disabilities. The success of both the SPEDMIP and Traditional Compliance Reviews during the 2000-2001 school year can be attributed to the efforts of the management team, the NHDOE, the school districts, private schools and other constituents who have worked with us. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the entire management team for their skills, dedication, professionalism and tireless efforts. I wish to personally acknowledge Nancy Brogden, Harvey Harkness, Maryclare Heffernan, Richard Lates, Leigh Zoellick and Susan IZard for their proactive leadership, their open and exhilarating dialog, intelligence, humanistic values and humorous wit. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Sheryl Porter, Program Assistant, for her skills, knowledge and tireless effort and dedication to ensuring the program approval process runs smoothly.

SERESC takes great pride and pleasure in working with the NH Department of Education. We recognize and appreciate everyone's efforts to ensure the success of all New Hampshire students.