



**Continuous Improvement
Focused Monitoring Report
for**

SHERIDAN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #3

November 29 – 30, 2011

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Wyoming Department of Education Continuous Improvement Focused Monitoring Report

Sheridan County School District #3

School Year: 2011 – 2012

Date of On-Site Review: November 29 – November 30, 2011

Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B Regulations include the following provision: *The State must monitor the implementation of this part, enforce this part in accordance with §300.604 (a)(1) and (a)(3), (b)(2)(i) and (b)(2)(v), and (c)(2), and annually report on performance under this part. (b) The primary focus of the State's monitoring activities must be on: (1) improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities; and (2) ensuring that public agencies meet the program requirements under Part B of the Act, with a particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities [34 C.F.R. §300.600].*

Process

A. Performance Indicator Selection

Consistent with the requirements established in 34 C.F.R §§300.600 through 300.604, the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) focuses on those elements of information and data that most directly relate to or influence student performance, educational results and functional outcomes for children with disabilities. To assist the WDE in its fulfillment of these requirements, the Department solicited input from its General Supervision Stakeholder Group¹ during the fall of 2011. The Stakeholder Group assisted in setting the priority indicators and scoring system to be used in determining which districts would be selected for on-site monitoring.

As stated previously, IDEA places a strong emphasis on positive educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities ages three through 21. This emphasis greatly influences the annual selection of key indicators of student performance from the State Performance Plan as priorities for the Continuous Improvement Focused Monitoring (CIFM) process. The ultimate goal of the CIFM process is to promote systems change which will positively influence educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities.

With input from the stakeholder group, the WDE created a single indicator for this year's district selection mechanism: PAWS proficiency rates for students in grades 7 and 8. Specifically, the Department calculated the change (positive or negative) in regular PAWS proficiency rates for these grades in reading and mathematics from 2008 to 2011 for students with disabilities. The Department did this to get a measure of districts'

¹ The Stakeholder Group is comprised of principals, special education directors, teachers, parents, advocates and superintendents from across the state.

success in improving academic results for students in these grades over a four-year period. Those districts with the largest declines in proficiency rates (from 2008 to 2011) were most likely to be selected for on-site CIFM visits (along with one district selected at random).

B. Individual District Selection

To improve its district selection process, the WDE has divided the state's 48 school districts into four population groups based on overall enrollment numbers:

- Large Districts – more than 1,950 students
- Medium Districts – 860 to 1,949 students
- Small Districts – 500 to 859 students
- Extra Small Districts – 499 or fewer students

Sheridan County School District #3 (SCSD #3) is considered an “extra small” school district and reported a special education population of 23 students on its 2011 WDE-427 report. Thus, the district's 2010 – 2011 special education data were ranked against data from all other extra small districts for the same time period. Districts with the lowest scores in each population group were selected for an on-site monitoring visit using the comparison to state rates found below. Districts who received on-site monitoring visits during the 2010 – 2011 school year were excluded from consideration for monitoring this year in order to give them adequate time to implement their Corrective Action Plans.

Measurement	Sheridan 3	State (minus Sheridan 3)
<i>Number students on July 2011 427 File</i>	23	15,443
A. Math proficiency rates for special education students in spring 2011	60.00%	47.72%
B. Reading proficiency rates for special education students in spring 2011	16.67%	38.78%
C. Sum of A and B	76.67%	86.50%
D. Math proficiency rates for grade 7 and 8 special education students in spring 2008	77.78%	41.66%
E. Reading proficiency rates for grade 7 and 8 special education students in spring 2008	22.22%	29.49%
F. Sum of D and E	100.00%	71.15%
G. Difference Score: C minus F	-0.2333	0.1535

Although caution is warranted in when analyzing Sheridan #3 data (due to the district's small population of students with disabilities), the district's PAWS proficiency data used in the selection formula compare favorably to the state overall in mathematics but unfavorably in reading. When one compares 2011 PAWS proficiency results to those from 2008, however, the district's scores were approximately 18% lower in mathematics and roughly 5% lower in reading during last spring's assessment. Taken in sum, the district's regular statewide assessment proficiency rates for middle school students with disabilities in reading and math decreased by just over 23% from the 2008 administration to the 2011 administration. The decrease is most notable in the area of reading, in which 16.67% of the district's 7th and 8th graders scored 'Proficient' or 'Advanced' on the regular 2011 PAWS reading test (compared to almost 39% statewide). When the WDE compared this assessment data with other districts in this population group, Sheridan #3's total score was the lowest of eligible districts in the "extra small" cohort. As such, the district was selected for an onsite visit from the Continuous Improvement Focused Monitoring team.

It should be noted that the district's performance on these measures is not conclusive evidence of special education noncompliance. After a district has been selected for on-site monitoring, the WDE then fully analyzes district data to determine potential areas of noncompliance that may account for the district's performance. For example, if a school had low PAWS proficiency rates in mathematics and low rates of regular class placement, the question of whether or not children had access to the general curriculum might be reviewed. A finding of noncompliance can only be made through the WDE's CIFM system if multiple pieces of objective information point to the same conclusion.

Focused Monitoring Conditions for Sheridan County School District #3

In preparation for the on-site monitoring visit, the WDE reviewed Sheridan #3 data from a variety of sources including the WDE-425 and WDE-427 data collections, assessment data (PAWS and PAWS-ALT) from 2006 through 2011, stable and risk-based self-assessment data, and discipline data from the WDE-636. In its review of data, the WDE focused on those pieces of information most closely related to improving outcomes for students with disabilities. This led the WDE to create two hypotheses related to the district's provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment:

- 1. FAPE – Educational Benefit** This hypothesis was developed due to the district's comparatively low PAWS proficiency rates for students with disabilities.
- 2. Evaluation Procedures and Eligibility Determinations** This hypothesis was generated in response to district data showing a high percentage of Sheridan #3 students with disabilities eligible under the Speech Language Impairments and/or Learning Disabilities.

Details regarding the development of both hypotheses and information on how the WDE determined its samples for them are found below in the introduction to each finding area.

In addition to the hypotheses chosen for on-site focused monitoring, the WDE also conducted a parent survey in the district during a four-week window that included the

dates of the on-site monitoring visit. Results of the parent survey are included with this report as Appendix A.

Results of On-Site Monitoring for Sheridan County School District #3

The WDE monitored these areas on-site through a focused file review and staff interviews. Each area begins with a description of the data that underpinned the hypothesis, a summary of evidence gathered in the district, and the WDE's compliance determination with findings of noncompliance if applicable.

Area 1: FAPE – Educational Benefit

A. Data

Due to the comparatively small number of students receiving special education services in Sheridan #3, the WDE's data review did not result in the generation of samples for monitoring. Typically, when the WDE suspects that some students are not receiving a Free Appropriate Public Education, the Department will select a sample of students who did not demonstrate proficiency on some subtest(s) of the prior year's PAWS testing. However during FFY 2010, only seven students with disabilities in the district participated in PAWS testing. Given the limited number of students with disabilities served in Arvada-Clearmont schools, the WDE opted to review every student's special education file to ensure that each one has an IEP that is reasonably calculated to result in educational benefit.

B. Methodology

1. File Review

As stated above, the WDE reviewed the files of all currently enrolled students with disabilities in Sheridan #3 in the exploration of this hypothesis. Through the file review process, nine students were removed from the sample for the following reasons:

- Six students moved or transferred out of the district.
- Three students' IEPs appeared to be reasonably calculated to result in educational benefit, and each was making adequate/expected progress.

This reduction left ten students remaining in the sample. Each of these students' files exhibited one or more of the following violations of federal special education regulations, prompting the WDE to further examine these student situations:

- 6 of the 10 files contained a current IEP that did not incorporate all of the student needs identified through the teams' evaluation reports [34 C.F.R. §§300.320(a)(1), 300.324(a)(1 – 2)].
- 4 of the 10 files contained a current IEP that did not contain annual goals addressing one or more areas of need described in the Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance section of the IEP [34 C.F.R. §300.320(a)(2)(i)].
- 6 of the 10 files contained a current IEP that included one or more annual goals that were not measurable [34 C.F.R. §300.320(a)(3)(i)].

- 4 of the 10 students' current IEP included a package of services that did not appear to enable the student to advance appropriately toward meeting his/her annual goals [34 C.F.R. §300.320(a)(4)].
- 5 of the 10 files contained a current IEP that was nonspecific in its designation of supplementary aids and services to be provided to the student [34 C.F.R. §§300.320(a)(4 & 6), 300.324(a)(2)].
- 7 of the 10 students' progress reporting information was not clearly documented in the IEP [34 C.F.R. §300.320(a)(3)].
- According to progress reporting information in the files, 3 of the 10 students were not making adequate or expected progress in one or more goal areas. Only one of these students' IEP teams had addressed the lack of progress by reconvening or amending the program [34 C.F.R. §300.324(b)(1)(ii)].
- 3 of the 10 students had one or more IEP goals that had not changed meaningfully from the previous IEP to the current IEP [34 C.F.R. §300.320(b)(1)].
- For 1 of the 10 students, there was evidence that some IEP team members' concerns had not been adequately addressed [34 C.F.R. §300.322(a)].
- 2 of the 10 students' records reflected a poor attendance history; response from the IEP team was unclear in both cases [34 C.F.R. §§300.320(a)].

2. Interviews

Following the file review, WDE monitoring team members interviewed district special education staff, general education teachers and related service providers regarding these ten specific students. Through the interview process, seven additional students were removed from the sample for the following reasons:

- Regarding four students, district personnel were able to provide details demonstrating that each of the students were now making progress and receiving educational benefit.
- For three of the students, those interviewed were able to provide compelling evidence that these students' needs were in fact being addressed adequately through special education and related services.

This reduction left three students remaining in the subsample. The following comments are among those made by district staff, which lend further support for a finding in this area:

- According to district staff, one student has unmet articulation needs. Staff reported that the student's speech is difficult to understand due to his/her difficulty with producing certain sounds.
- For one student, district personnel commented that a particular student has received roughly half of the related service time that should have been provided to him/her during the current school year (based on the frequency and duration of the service as documented in the IEP).
- Regarding one student whose progress was inadequate (given his/her annual goals), the student's IEP team has not reconvened or amended his/her program to address the lack of progress. In addition, a district staff member mentioned that he/she believes the student's educational needs have not all been identified.

C. Finding

The WDE finds that special education services in SCSD #3 are not always provided in accordance with the FAPE requirements established in 34 C.F.R. §§300.101, 300.320, and 300.324. The district will be required to address this substantive finding and violations of the related requirements listed under section B1 above. Correction requires the development and implementation of a Corrective Action Plan (CAP).

Area 2: Evaluation Procedures

A. Data

Due to the comparatively small number of students receiving special education services in Sheridan #3, the WDE's data review did not result in the generation of samples for monitoring. Typically, when the WDE suspects that some students' IEP teams may have conducted evaluations improperly or determined eligibility incorrectly, the monitoring team will build a sample of students whose WDE-427 data raise relevant questions (i.e. students with Learning Disabilities who do not receive "Instruction" as a Special Education service). However during FFY 2010, only 23 students with disabilities were served in Sheridan #3 throughout that school year. Given the limited number of students with disabilities served in Arvada-Clearmont schools, the WDE opted to review a file for this hypothesis only when the file review conducted for Area 1 (FAPE – Educational Benefit) denoted potential problems with a student's evaluation.

B. Methodology

1. File Review

Once on-site in Clearmont, the WDE reviewed the special education files of all active students with disabilities (a total of nineteen students). Through the file review process, fifteen of the students were removed from the sample for the following reasons:

- Nine of the students' special education files revealed that each one had received a comprehensive evaluation.
- Six students had moved or transferred out of the district.

This reduction left four students remaining in the sample. Each of these files exhibited one or more of the following violations of federal special education regulations, prompting the WDE to further examine these student situations:

- 4 of the 4 files contained evidence that the evaluation teams suspected an adverse educational impact due to the student's performance in a certain domain (i.e. vision, hearing, communication, etc.), but the suspicions were not fully probed during the evaluation [34 C.F.R. §300.304(c)(4)]
- In 3 of the 4 files, the evaluation teams failed to use a variety of assessment tools and strategies, relying instead on limited means of gathering assessment data [34 C.F.R. §300.304(b)(1)]
- 2 of the 4 files did not include documentation of parent input as a component of the evaluation process [34 C.F.R. §300.305(a)(2)]
- 2 of the 4 files were missing required evaluation components; in both cases, the students' files did not contain evidence of any standardized testing, which would have been necessary to demonstrate that these students met Wyoming's

eligibility criteria in the category in which they were identified [34 C.F.R. §300.305(a)(1)(ii)]

2. Interviews

Following the file review, WDE monitoring team members interviewed district special education staff, general education teachers and related service providers regarding these four specific students. Through the interview process, three additional students were removed from the sample for the following reasons:

- One student had received an articulation evaluation (although the documentation was inadvertently not included in his/her special education file).
- Another student was in the process of being reevaluated.
- The third student did not have educational needs (nor did the team members interviewed suspect needs) in the area suggested by other evaluation documents.

This reduction left one student remaining in the subsample. The following points summarize the student's situation and information gleaned from interviews, which lend support for a student-level finding in this area:

- The student's initial evaluation was conducted prior to the student's enrollment in Sheridan #3.
- The student was found eligible under Wyoming's Speech-Language Impairment criteria in the area of articulation.
- The student's file did not contain any evidence that a standardized articulation assessment was conducted. Other required evaluation components appeared to be in place, but no assessment results were found that could be used to ensure that the student's performance on such a measure was 1.5 standard deviations or greater below the mean for the child's chronological age.
- District staff interviewed were unable to produce any reports to demonstrate the student's performance on a standardized assessment of speech articulation.

C. Finding

The WDE finds SCSD #3 systemically compliant in this area. The State's compliance hypothesis related to Evaluation Procedures was not substantiated through on-site file reviews and interviews with district staff. The district is not required to address this area in a Corrective Action Plan (CAP).

However, for the individual student discussed under section B2 above, Sheridan #3 must take specific action. The student's WISER ID number is listed on the cover letter of this report. The WDE requires that the district reconvene the student's IEP team within 45 business days of the date of this report. The IEP team must consider the listed areas of concern in order to ensure that the student's evaluation has successfully identified all of his/her educationally relevant needs. If this student's IEP team has already met since the WDE's visit and addressed these concerns, please notify the Department as soon as possible. In any case, within the timeframe noted above, the WDE must be informed in writing of the actions taken.

Parent Survey Results

As part of the monitoring process, the WDE developed a Parent Survey in order to provide all parents an opportunity to give input on their children's special education experiences in Sheridan #3. The Department mailed a hard copy of the Parent Survey and a cover letter to each parent of a student currently receiving special education services in the district. Parents had the option of completing the survey on paper or completing it online. The WDE mailed a total of seventeen surveys, and one parent returned a completed survey to the WDE (5.88%). In Appendix A of this report, the complete survey results are included for the district's review.

**Continuous Improvement Focused Monitoring
Parent Survey for:
Sheridan County School District #3**

Total Respondents: 1

Total Parents who were mailed a survey: 17

Returned due to invalid address: 0

Response Rate: 5.88%

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
1. At Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, we talk about whether my child needs special education services during the summer or other times when school is not in session.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
2. My child is included in the general education classroom as much as is appropriate for his/her needs.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
3. My child's school addresses my child's educational needs.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
4. My child has made adequate progress over the course of the past year.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
5. My child's special education program is preparing him/her for life after school.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

6. Could your child's school be doing more to address his/her academic needs and improve your child's progress in school? 6a. If yes, what could the school be doing? <i>No comments</i>	Yes 0%	No 100%	Don't Know 0%
7. Did your child's school conduct testing in every area in which he/she might have needs that could be addressed through Special Education services? 9a. If no, which areas were not included in the testing? <i>No comments</i>	Yes 100%	No 0%	Don't Know 0%

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
8. My child's school provides me with information about organizations that offer support for parents of students with disabilities.	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
9. My child's teachers are available to speak with me.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
10. Teachers and administrators encourage me to participate in the decision-making process.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
11. My child's school gives parents the help they may need to play an active role in their child's education.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
12. My child's school explains what options parents have if they disagree with a decision of the school.	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%

13. Any other comments that you would like to share?

No comments