# Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT FAST FORWARD CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL January 4, 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 charter school and 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 Fast Forward Charter High School on November 15-16, 2006, included student record reviews, interviews with school administrators, teachers, and parents, and classroom observations. Parent surveys were also mailed to a small sample of parents. Information from these data sources was shared in an exit meeting attended by staff from Fast Forward Charter High School.

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**

- Special education forms have been reviewed and approved by the USOE.
- The Special Education Department at Fast Forward Charter High School (FFCHS) is comprised of a Director and a paraprofessional who is working toward licensure in special education. They actively work together with students, parents, teachers, and administrators to help students achieve.
- The FFCHS Special Education Policy and Procedures Manual has been reviewed and approved by the USOE.
- Child Find activities are appropriately implemented and coordinated.
- Federal IDEA and State Special Education monies are administrated in accordance with USOE Special Education Rules.
- Appropriate evaluation materials are used and administered by trained personnel.
- Administrative staff supervises and coordinates special education programs within FFCHS.
- Diagnostic and assessment personnel are highly qualified.
- Paraeducators are used to assist in the provision of special education services under the supervision of a special education teacher.
- Regular education interventions are attempted prior to referral for special education.
- School administrators are knowledgeable about special education practices and procedures, including the referral process and their role in the evaluation and IEP process.
- School administrators are very supportive of the students, parents, general education teachers, and special education staff in their efforts to help students who require special education services for academic success.
- Professional development planning is in place to provide needed training to support improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities.
- State professional development activities are utilized to train school staff to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- All new special education staff receive induction support through professional development activities.
- Identification of students is based upon state definitions, eligibility criteria, and appropriate evaluation procedures.
- The evaluation team reviews existing eligibility data to determine whether additional information is required for continuing eligibility.
- A variety of assessment tools are used to determine eligibility and all areas of suspected disability are evaluated.
- A group of qualified professionals, including parents, determine eligibility for special education services as per state and federal requirements.

- FFCHS has information regarding location for Independent Education Evaluations.
- School staff are committed to helping all students and implement knowledge from training to provide effective intervention and teaching practices as well as advocacy at IEP meetings.
- Special education staff and general education teachers work cooperatively to enhance the academic and social success of all students.
- Excellent file organization system in place.
- Consistent use of current forms in all files.
- Special education teachers using Review of Existing Data form correctly as part of reevaluation process.
- Assessments were thorough, complete, and conducted in a variety of areas.
- School concern for student safety evident in security procedures both in school and outside of building.
- Students with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in all classes and extracurricular activities.
- Strong administrative knowledge and support for special education policies and procedures.
- School climate demonstrates a strong commitment for student success, shown through parent and school staff interviews and student focus group.
- School staff attend weekly meetings to discuss student needs.
- Parents stated that school staff are responsive to questions and concerns at any time.
- School staff are aware of all students on an individual basis, which enables them to build rapport and identify concerns early on.
- Students with disabilities reported feeling that teachers cared about them personally.
- Student evaluation/reevaluations were summarized and based upon data.
- Special education records are written in large font and in a format that is easily readable and understandable.

### **Parent Involvement**

- Fast Forward Charter High School uses the USOE approved Procedural Safeguard Notice.
- Procedural Safeguards are given to parents at least annually and upon request.
- Parents feel that they have a strong and valued role in their student's services and the IEP process.
- School staff accepts and values parental opinions.
- Parents are provided with prior written notice before initiation or change of placement.
- Survey results indicated that parents of students at Fast Forward Charter High School are happy with the services provided by the special education department.
- Some parents reported being active participants at the IEP meeting, having a general education teacher in attendance at the IEP meeting, and that their student was receiving the IEP services.
- Parents also reported receiving progress reports; some received them at parent-teacher conferences, while others received written or verbal summaries.
- Parents stated that their student has made improvement and are being helped by the special education services provided, while others commented that their student is not singled out or made to feel embarrassed about their special needs.
- Parents are provided with copies of documents.
- Written parent consent is obtained prior to evaluation or placement.
- Progress reports are provided to parents.
- Special education staff respond to suggestions from parents for program improvement.
- Parents have the ability to give feedback about their student's special education program through anonymous surveys.
- Fast Forward Charter High School encourages parent involvement in all aspects of education.
- Copies to parents and written prior notice embedded in special education forms.
- Notice of Meeting present in files and complete.
- Documentation of progress reports documented in files.
- Consent forms signed and contained in files.
- Special education teachers had strong knowledge of Procedural Safeguards.
- Parents reported having Procedural Safeguards explained to them and understanding them.
- Parents appreciated the support from the special education teachers for their students and themselves.
- Parents reported school principal and special education teachers available to address concerns.

### Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

• Services and accommodations on the IEP are provided.

- Teachers indicated accommodations currently used with students with disabilities within their classroom and on U-PASS assessments.
- General education teachers feel that they are an active, valued member of the team, whose role is to give the parent's input as to how the students are functioning in the classroom and offering suggestions to help the student succeed.
- Students with disabilities are encouraged to participate in all offered activities.
- All student files were reviewed during the Self-Assessment process.
- Graduation rates of students with disabilities are comparable or better than graduation rate for students without disabilities.
- All teachers work hard to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting.
- Students are served in the general education classroom when possible and are not removed solely due to needed modifications in the curriculum.
- IEPs are developed within 30 days of initial eligibility determination.
- Students with disabilities at FFCHS receive services in the least restrictive environment (LRE), along a continuum of special education services, which is comparable to state LRE data.
- Students with disabilities are removed from FFCHS for suspensions or expulsions at a consistent rate as those without disabilities.
- Initial services begin as soon as possible following IEP development.
- Appropriate procedures are followed in regards to discipline for students with disabilities.
- The IEP team considers all necessary factors, including behavior, limited English proficiency, communication needs, adaptive technology needs, and extended school year (ESY) services when reviewing and revising each student's IEP.
- All students participate in statewide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations as needed.
- General education teachers and special education teachers utilize U-PASS data to adapt curriculum and instruction in their classrooms.
- Individualized Education Plans (IEP) Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance statements (PLAAFPs) contained data and how the disability affects involvement/progress in the general curriculum.
- General education teachers are aware of students on individualized education plans and the accommodations needed.
- Students know their accommodations and attend IEP meetings.
- Assessment and instructional accommodations included in the IEP.
- Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) and Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) in place when needed.
- IEP Special factors addressed.
- During classroom observations in general education classes, students received accommodation listed on the IEPs.

### **Transitions**

- IEPs contain post-school goals based on student interest.
- Students are provided with a summary of academic achievement and functional performance when they graduate or age out of special education services.
- Students were surveyed to determine their feelings regarding being identified as needing special education services and the impact of those services on their academic success. Students feel that special education services help them succeed better academically.
- Fast Forward Charter High School utilizes a cooperative relationship with the BATC to assist students with exploring vocational options.
- Post-school outcomes identified in transition plans.
- Evidence of age-appropriate transition assessment contained in special education files.
- Special Education Director reports that Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is invited to IEP/transition meetings.
- Transition plans included as part of IEPs.
- School-wide interest inventories conducted with students each Spring.
- Summary of Performance was evident during file review of graduated student.

# Disproportionality

• Students are identified as eligible under IDEA, also following charter school and state policies and procedures that ensure those from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds are not over-identified.

- School ethnicity and disability rates are comparable to state rates and charter school enrollment.
- FFCHS reported no suspensions/expulsions for longer than 10 days during the 2005-2006 school year.

# Areas of Systemic Noncompliance\*

- ✓ 1 licensed teacher has a caseload of 46 students until 2<sup>nd</sup> teacher is licensed.
- ✓ Initial evaluation timelines exceeded.
- ✓ Evaluation Procedures not followed.
- ✓ IEP timelines exceeded.
- ✓ IEP Team Membership did not include all required team members in applicable reviewed files.
- ✔ Placement decision reasons not documented.
- ✓ Transition plans do not include student specific course of study and IEP goals do not specifically address post-school outcomes.

<sup>\*</sup>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.