

**Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS)  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT  
Mountainville Academy  
January 30, 2009**

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 development of a Program Improvement Plan. The second phase, On-Site Validation, conducted at Mountainville Academy on November 19, 2008 included student record reviews and school site visits. Parent surveys were also mailed to a small sample of parents.

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**

- The collaboration between members of the file review team created greater awareness of the details involved and requirements to ensure compliance. While time-consuming and rigorous, it was a positive activity that illuminated several areas needing greater attention and efficiency.
- There have been some good professional development activities carried out during the 2007-2008 school year, both on-site and accessed by sending staff members to conferences. Almost all staff received training on the child find process and special education policies regarding confidentiality.
- The special education director is highly qualified with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, Mild/Moderate Special Education endorsement, a Master's degree in Instructional Technology, experience/training as a teacher of the blind and visually impaired, and Mandt certified. Three of six department teaching assistants on staff during the 2007-08 school year were highly qualified, with Associate or Bachelor's degrees. The department is adding two more assistants for the 2008-09 school year who have Bachelor's degrees and considerable experience working with students with disabilities and applied behavioral analysis (ABA) programs.
- Since the inception of Mountainville Academy, it has been the special education director's observation that the majority of the staff extends every courtesy to students with special needs and they are eager and always asking about how they can accommodate students with special needs, indicating a willingness to learn new skills to do so.
- The special education director has regularly attended weekly Middle School team meetings for the last two years which has resulted in a high degree of communication benefitting students in those grades.
- Files were stored in locking filing cabinets with access authorization lists posted and files contained records of access.
- Special education director develops special education programs to meet the individual needs of the children.
- Special education files were well organized and easy to access.
- Paraprofessionals are well trained and able to implement student programs in the special education classroom in the absence of the special education teachers.

- The inclusive model observed in the general education classroom facilitated student involvement in the general curriculum.
- Parents reported the special education teacher goes above their expectations by the teacher making home visits, taking parent phone calls over the weekend, and exploring different program options to meet the students' needs.
- Initial evaluation timelines were met in 100% of applicable reviewed files.
- Complete evaluation summary reports and eligibility determination forms are included in 100% of applicable reviewed files.
- Reevaluation timelines met in 100% of applicable reviewed files.
- Evaluation procedures were followed in 100% of applicable reviewed files.

### **Parent Involvement**

- Most parents report being very pleased with the special education services and personnel. They appreciated the caring attitude demonstrated by all staff including the director/teacher, teaching assistants and related service providers.
- Parents indicated great appreciation for the feedback from special education teacher, teaching assistants and related service providers. This feedback was provided via in person conversations, phone calls and emails.
- Parents were pleased with their student's academic progress and reported they felt as though the special education staff were making a difference in their child's education.
- Parents have been actively involved in the special education program at the school. Some have served and taken an active role on the UPIPS Steering Committee.
- Most parents seem aware of their rights to some degree and have consistently been given copies of their Procedural Safeguards.
- Parents report providing input to the IEP process and believe that their input was considered and respected.
- Parents reported that their student is making progress on their IEP goals.
- Parents stated that the students were recognized for their efforts and not just academic achievement.
- Parents believe that the school is flexible and accommodates their questions, concerns and their student's needs.
- Parents report having their Procedural Safeguards explained to them and report high level of understanding of their rights.
- Parent signatures were included on all required documents.
- Prior written notice statements were provided to parents for evaluations, eligibility determinations, placement decisions, and implementation of IEPs.
- Notice of meeting was provided to parents for all required meetings.

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

- IEPs are developed with the team focusing on aligning goals to the core curriculum and providing students with disabilities access to the general curriculum.
- Students receive the majority of instruction in the regular classroom setting. The curriculum used at Mountainville Academy lends itself to ability grouping, allowing students to be taught at their level and pace.
- Students report receiving benefits from the Study Skills class.
- Students are given the time, attention, and support needed to perform well on standardized tests.
- Students with disabilities are included with all students in all school activities, including the school play, basketball teams, chess club, band and orchestra.
- Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements are very comprehensive; include baseline data, and how the disability affects progress in the general curriculum.
- IEP goals are measurable and address all areas of need identified in the PLAAFP statements.
- A new process is being implemented to provide general education teachers with needed IEP information.

- IEPs contain special education services, including related services, supplementary aides/services, and accommodations for students on the U-PASS testing.

### **Transitions**

- This is not an area of concern for Mountainville since this is a K-8 school and student with IEPs are not involved in formal transition planning. However, we realize that students need to begin early to understand their own strengths and needs, to learn to advocate for themselves and participate in their own IEPs and program development.
- Results of the Student Focus Survey showed that 9 of 14 middle school students participated in their own IEP meeting. In addition about 4 students grades 5-6 also participated.
- Mountainville Academy does not have students of transition age at this time.

### **Disproportionality**

- Currently with a caseload of 86 students, Mountainville is serving about 12.7% of its student population in special education. The number is reasonable and would seem to indicate that eligibility procedures are appropriate.
- There does not seem to be a disproportionate amount of ethnic or gender groups represented in special education. Most disability categories also seem reasonable and close to state averages.
- Primary home language and race/ethnicity is documented in student files.

### **Areas of Systemic Noncompliance\***

- Evaluation was not sufficiently comprehensive in 20% of applicable reviewed files.

*\*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.*