

**Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS)**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**  
**AMERICAN LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**  
**January 30, 2008**

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 in American Leadership Academy on December 4, 2007, included student record reviews, interviews with school administrators, teachers, and parents. 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 self review of the student IEP files was a positive learning experience for those who participated.
- The results of the file reviews indicated areas that need to be improved and gave instant insight to the teachers into areas where they need to improve.
- The teaching team has been solidified with the hiring of a new special education teacher to bring the caseload into compliance.
- ALA will increase efforts to analyze data each new year, as to get better longitudinal data to drive special education programs.
- Paraeducators have been trained on their job roles and responsibilities.
- All required federal and state reports have been turned in to the USOE.
- All forms are in compliance with state and federal requirements.
- All Child Find activities are in compliance with state and federal requirements.
- All identification and evaluation tools and materials are in compliance with state and federal requirements.
- Initial evaluations were completed within the required timeline for students determined eligible and not eligible.
- Confidentiality procedures were in place for special education records. Special education files contained Record of Access forms and were stored in a secure environment. Annual training is also provided to school staff.
- All school staff members have been trained in the child find and referral process prior to the school year beginning.
- School staff are aware and accepting of students with disabilities. They displayed passion towards meeting the needs of their students, individualizing instruction, and responding to parents.
- Students stated that they can participate in any extra-curricular activities offered at the school.
- ALA utilizes current and approved special education forms.
- Special education files are well organized.
- There are adequate special education staff to meet the numbers and needs of the students with disabilities.
- Cross age tutoring and cooperative teaching classes are used to provide additional support to struggling students.
- Students, when interviewed, described accommodations that they receive in the general education classroom.

- Collaboration was evident between special education and general education teachers.
- Benchmarking occurs on a regular basis; DIBELS data was included in IEPs.
- ALA is beginning to implement a 3-tiered reading model.
- Team input is considered and documented during review of existing data.

### **Parent Involvement**

- Parents are generally pleased with their child's progress and with the IEP that has been developed by the team.
- Parents are considered a vital part of the team and participate in all decisions made by the IEP team.
- Parents seem supportive of the school and the special education department.
- The results of the surveys with students, regular education teachers, special education teachers, itinerant personnel and principal seemed to match the same results as to parent involvement at the school. Parents took an active role in the UPIPS process and were willing to help in any way needed. The staff concluded, as did the parents, that the school was making an effort to involve them in all aspects of the child's education.
- Parents are very active in supporting the school and the special education program through donating time, supplies, materials, reward, etc.
- Parents are notified of their right to an independent evaluation at no cost to the parent, including travel and the cost of the examiner.
- Parents are given information on where and how to access independent evaluations.
- A surrogate parent has been trained and is available when needed.
- ALA has provided IEP training classes for parents.
- Teachers, both special education and general education, email parents to inform them of student progress.
- Notice of meetings for meetings held at ALA were documented and included in special education files for eligibility determination, IEP development, and placement.
- Parent signatures were included on all required forms, documenting their opportunity for input and their receipt of copies of IEPs and eligibility determination. Parents, when interviewed, also reported receiving copies.
- Parents, when interviewed, were happy with the school personnel, services provided, and the opportunities in which they were invited to provide input.
- Parents feel that the teachers are aware of their student's needs and that the school staff consistently provide accommodations in the general classroom.
- Parents attend IEPs, as documented by their signatures and student reports.
- Parents receive prior written notice of proposed actions regarding evaluation, eligibility, IEP implementation, and placement, including change of placement.
- Parents reported that their students are making progress towards their IEP goals.
- Parents report that the school encourages their involvement as a means of improving services for their students.

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

- The team (including parents) develops IEPs with the focus on the individual child.
- The LEA plays a vital role in the IEP process.
- Students are being educated with their non-disabled peers and attend regular classes and are a part of all school and extra-curricular activities.
- All students have been welcomed to the charter school and accommodations have been afforded to all students, as needed.
- Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements and goals were aligned (goals addressed needs identified in the PLAAFP statement).
- IEPs in reviewed files were current.
- Full IEP teams participated in the development of the IEP. Students reported attending IEP meetings and could describe what an IEP was.
- IEPs included behavior goals, including self-monitoring of own behavior.
- All students have access to the general education environment and curriculum, including physical education, to the extent determined appropriate by the IEP team.

- Students, parents, and school staff, when interviewed, described the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- Assessment accommodations, as well as supplemental aids and services and projected date for services to begin were addressed in IEPs.
- Extended school year (ESY) and special factor decisions were addressed and documented on IEPs.
- IEP meetings were scheduled at mutually agreeable times, as reported by school personnel and parents.
- Placement decisions are made by the IEP team and documented.
- Student needs are addressed within the IEP, as reported by parents.
- Collaboration, between general education and special education personnel, as well as parents, occurs often, as reported by school staff and parents. General education teachers and related service providers are given a copy of relevant portions of student IEPs.

### **Transitions**

- The Mountainlands Applied Technology Center (MATC) is being used to help provide educational options for students.
- A staff member has been assigned to be the transition specialist for the program.
- Some students have community-based job experiences.
- Parents reported being aware of graduation requirements.
- IEPs contain transition services focused on improving the academic achievement of the student to facilitate movement from school to post-school.

### **Disproportionality**

- IEP files contain documentation of race/ethnicity and primary home language.
- The ALA principal is a fluent Spanish speaker and has leadership experience in schools with diverse populations.

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

- Evaluation Procedures: Review of Existing Data not documented prior to reevaluation; Evaluation Summary Reports did not include data; evaluation procedures not followed;
  - Emotional Disturbance Disability Category – The team did not document that the behaviors were not due to an ID, vision or hearing impairment, or other medical condition; the team did not document that the behavior has been exhibited over a long period of time and to a marked degree; the team did not document at least 3 educational observations; the team did not document the behaviors for which the student was referred.
  - Specific Learning Disability Category – The team did not document an observation of the student's academic performance and the team did not document the relevant behavior noted during an observation of the student's academic performance.
- Transfer procedures not consistently implemented when files are requested and received from other LEAs within Utah.
- Copies to parents of evaluation summary reports not documented.
- Notice of Meeting for Transition not documented.
- IEP Content: PLAAFPS did not contain baseline/current data or contain a statement of how disability affects access to and progress in the general curriculum; IEP annual goals were not measurable; ESY goals, services, and amount of time not documented.
- Timelines: IEPs and placement not reviewed annually.
- School to Post-School Transition: Transition plans did not contain documentation of post-secondary training or education goals; transition plans did not contain documentation of employment goals; transition plans did not contain documentation of independent living skills goals; IEPs did not document that measurable post-secondary goals were based upon transition assessments; transition plans did not include a course of study; IEP does not contain documentation that student is informed of transfer of rights at Age of Majority.

\*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.