



# Illinois State Board of Education

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State Superintendent of Education

May 6, 2010

Kenneth M. Arndt  
Superintendent  
CUSD 300  
300 Cleveland Avenue  
Carpentersville, IL 60110

Dear Mr. Arndt:

Thank you for the courtesy extended during the special education focused monitoring review conducted with the CUSD 300 during April 05, 2010 through April 09, 2010.

The enclosed report describes the focused monitoring process and identifies specific areas needing improvement. In addition, instructions are provided relative to required follow-up activities, including the implementation of corrective actions, the development of an improvement plan and documentation to be submitted as evidence of correction and change. Technical assistance regarding these activities will be provided by your assigned team leader, Kelly Wojcik.

If you have any questions regarding this report or the focused monitoring process, please contact Kelly Wojcik at (217) 782-5589.

Sincerely,

David Andel  
Division Administrator  
Special Education Services Division

Kelly Wojcik  
Principal Education Consultant  
Special Education Services Division

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DISTRICT 300  
P.P.S. DEPT.

**Focused Monitoring Report**

**of**

**CUSD 300**

Date of Final Report: May 6, 2010

Date of On-Site Review:  
April 5, 2010 - April 9, 2010

ISBE Team Leader: Kelly Wojcik

ISBE Team Member: Betty Hendrickson

ISBE Team Member: V. Sue Taylor

ISBE Team Member: Shaun Saville

Parent Member: Joy Bux

Peer Member: Pete Marcelo

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## I. Description of Monitoring Authority and Focused Monitoring

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (20 U.S.C. 1400 (c)(1)), provides federal funds to assist states in educating children with disabilities and requires each participating state to ensure that school districts and other publicly-funded educational agencies in the state comply with the requirements of IDEA and its implementing regulations. Further, Section 616 of IDEA states that the primary focus of Federal and State monitoring activities shall be on improving education results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities and ensuring that States meet the program requirements with a particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities. Illinois state law requires local school districts to provide appropriate special education and related services and requires the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to establish, monitor, and enforce regulations governing special education programs in the Illinois public schools and all institutions wholly or partly supported by the state. The state has adopted regulations implementing those requirements which are administered by ISBE. ISBE supervises and conducts the general supervision process in furtherance of the state's obligations under IDEA and Illinois law.

Focused monitoring is an approach to determining compliance with federal and state special education law and regulations while also addressing critical performance areas. It is a shift from a culture of compliance to a culture of accountability. It places the emphasis of a monitoring review on results versus process. The principles of focused monitoring are identified as follows:

- Focused monitoring includes a limited number of priorities chosen by a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Available data are used to select priorities that will improve child and student educational performance, increase independence for children with disabilities, and lead to full participation in society.
- A limited number of indicators are identified within each priority area and are used as the basis for district ranking and selection for on-site reviews.
- A focused monitoring system is data and information-based. Data-based information is used to allocate limited resources in the direction of most need, which are determined by identifying what is most likely to lead to improvement in student performance.
- There is a relationship between monitoring and corrective actions—solutions are linked to identified problems. Corrective actions are designed to create systemic changes that result in improved student performance.
- Families have the opportunity to provide information on a continuous basis.

With assistance from stakeholder groups, ISBE identified priority areas and critical performance indicators (CPIs) utilized in determining school districts most at risk for failing to meet performance. These indicators are part of a pool from which indicators for focused monitoring will be chosen annually based upon school district data. The Critical Performance Indicator of Educational Environment was selected from the

indicator pool for use in determining school districts most at risk for failing to meet performance (high risk/low performance).

The ISBE focused monitoring district selection process includes dividing districts into similar clusters based upon district type and enrollment size. ISBE extracts district data from the State's Special Education Monitoring/Reporting System to rank school districts on the CPI. The System generates a CPI comparison report to display the data. In most instances, those districts in each cluster performing lowest on the CPI will receive an on-site review.

The following formula was used to rank districts within the indicator:

*Each district is ranked on the percent of students with disabilities served under EE code 01 (inside the general education classroom more than 80% of the school day) with an N size of 30 students. If there are no districts (or very few districts) within a cluster that meets the N size, districts will be selected randomly from that cluster.*

## II. Focused Monitoring Methodology

The on-site focused monitoring review was conducted with the CUSD 300 on April 5, 2010 - April 9, 2010. The team visited two (2) elementary schools, two (2) middle/junior high schools and three (3) high schools in the district. The monitoring team reviewed and analyzed the following data in relation to the on-site review.

### Data Reviewed

- Special education policies and procedures
- District and School Improvement Plans
- Professional Development Plan
- School Report Card
- Special Education Profile
- Family/school collaboration
- FACTS data

CUSD 300												
	2007				2008				2009			
	% of Time Inside General Education Classroom			Separate Facility	% of Time Inside General Education Classroom			Separate Facility	% of Time Inside General Education Classroom			Separate Facility
	≥80%	40-79%	<40%		≥80%	40-79%	<40%		≥80%	40-79%	<40%	
District	40.2	28.0	25.8	6.0	40.2	27.3	26.8	5.8	41.1	25.4	27.0	6.5
Like Districts	50.7	27.5	16.8	5.0	50.8	27.3	16.9	5.0	52.2	26.7	15.8	5.2

## **Forum**

A public forum was held on April 05, 2010 for parents of students with disabilities and community stakeholders. The district provided documentation of adequate and appropriate public notice advertising the forum. The forum was attended by forty eight (48) parents of students with disabilities and five (5) community stakeholders.

## **On-Site Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with fourteen (14) general education administrators, twelve (12) special education administrators, forty five (45) general education teachers, sixteen (16) special education teachers, eight (8) paraprofessionals, and eight (8) related services personnel. In addition, interviews were conducted with a Title I teacher, a bilingual teacher, a credit recovery teacher, and two interventionists.

## **Record Reviews**

Record reviews were conducted for thirty five (35) students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Records selected were representative of the students' primary disabilities, age/grade levels and special education programs within the district.

## **Staff Surveys**

A total of four hundred thirty three (433) surveys were collected from personnel. Individuals that completed the surveys included one hundred sixty eight (168) general education teachers, one hundred fifteen (115) special education teachers, ninety two (92) related service providers, seventeen (17) support staff, and twenty three (23) administrators. Multiple roles could be selected on the survey.

### **III. Positive Aspects of the District Related to the Indicator**

In relation to the identified critical performance indicator, of Educational Environment, the following efforts and/or initiatives have been implemented by the district. These activities have been recognized as positive efforts on the part of the district to initiate improved student outcomes.

- Use of data to make decisions on placement especially for reading classes
- Use of support personnel in general education classes to support student needs
- Willingness of the general education teachers to have special education teachers and support staff in the general education classroom
- Sharing of curricular materials in some of the buildings
- Common planning time available for staff in some of the buildings
- Use of PBIS in some buildings

## IV. District Findings Related to the Indicator

### Areas of Noncompliance

#### Finding I – Educational Placement

Evidence demonstrates that all students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) do not have equitable access to the general education setting. Students with IEPs often receive instruction outside of the general education classroom. A review of CUSD 300's Special Education Profile documents that educational environment for the past three years has been fairly constant but is below the average for all unit districts and the state target. Evidence demonstrated that placement decisions are not made by a team nor are placement decisions based on the child's IEP.

#### **Regulatory Citation: 34 CFR §300.116 Placements**

*In determining the educational placement of a child with a disability, including a preschool child with a disability, each public agency must ensure that-*

- a) *The placement decision-*
  - 1) *Is made by a group of persons, including the parents, and other persons knowledgeable about the child, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options; and*
  - 2) *Is made in conformity with LRE provisions of the subpart, including §§ 300.114 through 300.118;*
  
- b) *The child's placement-*
  - 1) *Is determined at least annually;*
  - 2) *Is based on the child's IEP; and*
  - 3) *Is as close as possible to the child's home;*
  
- c) *Unless the IEP of a child with a disability requires some other arrangement, the child is educated in the school that he or she would attend if nondisabled;*
  
- d) *In selecting the LRE, consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services that he or she needs: and*
  
- e) *A child with a disability is not removed from education in age appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general education curriculum.*

#### **Area of Noncompliance -- Finding II – Definition of Individualized Education Program**

Evidence demonstrated that students do not have appropriate supplementary aids and services provided to advance toward attaining the annual goals or to be successful within the general education classroom. When determining

placement, an explanation of how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum is not well documented nor is the extent to which the student will not participate with non-disabled peers addressed.

**Regulatory Citation: 34 CFR §300.320 Definition of individualized education program, which states,**

- 1) A statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including-
  - (i) How the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children); or
- 4) A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child-
  - (i) To advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;
  - (ii) To be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum in accordance with paragraph (a)(1) of this section, and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and
  - (iii) To be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children in the activities described in this section;
- 5) An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and in the activities described in paragraph (a)(4) of this section;

**Supporting Evidence**

District data for the 2008-2009 school year documents that only 41.1% of students with IEPs are receiving their education in the general education classroom 80% or more of the school day. This is a difference of 11.1% as compared to all unit districts in the state.

During the visit, thirty five (35) student records were reviewed. Of the records reviewed 74% did not have all appropriate team members present at the meeting. Members who were absent at meetings included the local education agency (LEA) representative, the general education teacher, the special education teacher, the speech/language pathologist, and the social worker.

Additionally, 74% of the files did not demonstrate that the placement decisions were made based on the child's IEP. In several cases the placement decision made was not supported by the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance,

there was no explanation for why a particular placement was chosen, or the Educational Environment (EE) that was chosen did not match the placement that was carried onto the conference summary page. On some of the IEPs, three placement options were considered; however, two of the placements appeared to be identical resulting in the same placement option being rejected as well as accepted. As a result of the confusion caused by the inconsistency of EE information documented on the IEPs, the validity of the data regarding EE is in question.

On 57% of the IEPs, there was no explanation of how the student's disability affected his/her involvement in the general curriculum and on 43% of the IEPs there was no explanation of the extent to which the student would not participate with non-disabled students in the general education class. Although only 9% of the IEPs reviewed did not address the need for supplementary aids and services, interviews with general education teachers, staff surveys, and information from the parent forum indicated this as an area of concern. Overall, a majority of the IEPs did not have a clear connection between the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, the supplemental aids and services, and the placement option selected.

General education teachers reported that they were unaware of or did not know how a student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance were used to determine placement; however, many did mention the data that was presented to discuss student progress. AIMS Web, Lexile scores, tests, and grades were used to discuss the extent to which a child was successful. Many teachers reported that they did not stay through the whole IEP meeting, so they were not a part of the placement discussion.

General education teachers get information about student's accommodations/modifications through Infinite Campus and can access that information whenever they need to do so. Some teachers felt that it was difficult to provide all of the accommodations/modifications that were listed on Infinite Campus. Many did not understand why so many accommodations/modifications were needed and felt that students with disabilities were "babied" and needed to have higher expectations put into place. When asked about what accommodations/modifications were available, most general education teachers stated that there was an aide in their class and that the student was allowed to leave the classroom to have tests read to them. General education teachers were unaware of what pieces of assistive technology could be put in place to help support students with disabilities. Other teachers stated that the special education teacher or case manager would have discussions with the general education teachers to get an idea of what supports were needed to help a student be successful, as well as obtain information about the student's level of success in the general education classroom.

Special education teachers reported that they needed to have the IEP paperwork filled out and checked over by the special education facilitators two weeks prior to the IEP meeting. Although special education teachers and general education teachers reported they have no common plan time, special education teachers did find time to meet with the general education teachers to obtain information about a student's progress in the

general education classroom and to discuss the effectiveness of the accommodations/modifications that were put in place.

Special education teachers described in detail how a student's test scores, grades, and reading levels were utilized to support placement decisions. Teachers did report that a general education teacher was always at the meeting, but typically did not stay for the duration of the meeting. General education teachers typically described how the student was doing in his/her class, what accommodations/modifications were utilized and had been successful, and then left the meeting. Some of the teachers stated that assistive technology was never considered but expressed a wish that they could have assistance with learning what technology options were available to support student learning.

When discussing the percentage of students in the general education classroom 80% or more of the day, both general and special education teachers were surprised by the numbers. Many teachers felt that students were in the general education setting for as much time as students could be. Some of the special education teachers expressed that the computer calculation of EE was often incorrect and they were unsure as to how EE was calculated. Placement options that were considered at the IEP meetings are always discussed, but the documentation of those discussions was not always clearly documented on the IEPs.

Special education administrators reported that until recently they used sub-categories for EE. In previous years, 01 could mean a student was in general education with consultative services, or it could mean they were in general education with an aide and had one special education class. All EE settings had various categories of placement options contained within them which have led to confusion during the meetings when discussing placement options. They also stated that there have been miscalculations of EE percentages that have been caused both by the computer program utilized as well as human error. In interviewing the special education facilitators, it was discussed that case managers needed to turn in the IEP paperwork prior to the meeting so the paperwork could be reviewed and they could then go back to the case manager to have errors corrected. Although special education facilitators review IEPs prior to the meeting to check for errors, it has been acknowledged that errors are not always caught which puts into question the validity of the EE data provided. Having IEPs completely filled out prior to the meeting does not allow parents and general education teachers to be true team members of the decision making process. Special education administrators in general felt there was a need for stronger IEP process training, as well as training for differentiated instruction, use of accommodations/modifications, and assistive technology.

When interviewed, related services staff reported that they would consult with the special education teacher regarding placement decisions prior to the IEP meeting. Many of the related services staff stated that during the meeting the student's progress was discussed with focus on the student's reading scores, current levels of performance, and grades. If a child was struggling in the general education class, he/she would be considered for more self-contained classes. The related services staff also stated that generally there was extensive conversation about supplementary aids

and services. Although assistive technology was not discussed at the IEP meeting, there was a desire to have more assistive technology available for students.

Parent forum participants indicated that they were not considered members of the IEP team. They indicated that placement decisions were made prior to the meeting and if their recommendations were different from the rest of the team, the meeting would become heated. Parents stated that placement decisions had to be changed because students were not getting the supports they needed. Parents expressed concern that not all classes were available to students with disabilities because not all classes were "supported" classes. They also stated that the support personnel that accompanied students to classes did not always know what needed to be done in order to support the student in the general education classroom nor did the aide have the content knowledge to provide assistance when required. Parents expressed frustration with the lack of technology available to students citing that assistive technology was not considered, parents had to go to outside sources to get assistive technology evaluations done, and if a student did receive access to assistive technology there were no supports in place to assure the device was working.

#### **Corrective Action – Finding I**

The district must address all areas of supporting evidence to ensure that students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) have equitable access to the general education setting.

#### **Required Evidence of Correction – Finding I**

On or before May 1, 2011 the ISBE team leader will randomly select 15 records for review. The documentation in 100% of the records will include evidence of:

- All appropriate team members are present at the IEP meeting
- Placement decisions are based on the child's IEP
- Educational environment chosen on the placement page is accurately transferred to the conference summary page.
- Educational environment is supported by the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance and supplementary aids and services required for the student to advance appropriately toward attaining his/her annual goals.
- Three different placement options are considered and the option chosen by the team is clearly documented.

#### **Corrective Action – Finding II**

The district must address all areas of supporting evidence to ensure that students have appropriate supplementary aids and services provided to advance toward attaining the annual goals or to be successful within the general education classroom.

### **Required Evidence of Correction – Finding II**

On or before May 1, 2010 the ISBE team leader will randomly select 15 records for review. The documentation in 100% of the records will include evidence of:

- An explanation of how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum that is specific to the student's identified needs
- An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with non-disabled students in the general education class is clearly documented
- Consideration for assistive technology is documented and supported by interviews with both the general and special education teachers.

Further, the ISBE team leader will conduct an on-site visit that will include interviews with general and special education staff to determine that professional development for co-teaching and/or differentiated instruction has occurred, ensure that discussions regarding assistive technology does occur during the IEP meeting, and IEPs are not fully completed prior to the meeting date and time.

Additionally, the district will complete progress reports (coinciding with FACTS transmissions) depicting the general increase in the number of students with IEPs being educated in the general education classroom for more than 80% of the day.

### **Required Evidence of Change**

The district must provide the following evidence of change specific to the identified findings of noncompliance. The evidence of change is designed to ensure that modifications have been made within the district that have ultimately led to improved performance on the indicator as reflected in the district's data.

The verified Educational Environment (EE) data for the 2008-09 school year identifies that 41.1% of students with disabilities are served 80% or more of the time in the general education setting (EE01); the district data must improve in this area by 5 percentage points. This benchmark for improvement will be the change in the district's educational environment data (EE 01) by June 31, 2012. The Measurable and Rigorous target established in the State Performance Plan for 2010-2011 school year is 49.9% of students with disabilities will be educated in the general education setting for at least 80% of the school day. The Measurable and Rigorous target for the 2011-2012 school year is yet to be determined but will increase.

## **V. Improvement Plan Process**

Upon receiving this final report, the CUSD 300 will be required to use the District Improvement Plan (DIP) template in the Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC) website to develop and submit a proposed improvement plan to ISBE within a period of 45 calendar days from the date of the final report. The Improvement Plan will be submitted

electronically through the District Improvement Plan process. This template is found at <http://iirc.niu.edu/>. The school district superintendent may access the template by entering the district password already provided to the district. You may email Gail Buoy at [gbuoy@isbe.net](mailto:gbuoy@isbe.net) for usernames and passwords; please identify your region-county-district code. The District Improvement Plan for special education focused monitoring must address all four sections of the template: data and analysis; action plan; plan development, review and implementation; and board action. If the school district has an existing DIP, strategies and activities related to special education must be incorporated into the existing plan to ensure alignment with current district initiatives.

After receiving the final report, the ISBE team leader will contact the district to begin the improvement plan process. In order to ensure that the improvement plan is comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and district-wide, the plan must be developed by a team. Depending upon the issues of noncompliance, the team should include the district superintendent (or another general education administrator who has the authority to commit district time and resources), the special education director or another special education administrator, a Regional Office of Education (ROE) representative, a general education teacher, a special education teacher, a related services staff member, the professional development coordinator, the curriculum coordinator, parents and others, as necessary. This plan must not be a uniquely special education response developed in isolation from other district initiatives. The ISBE team leader is available to participate in the initial meeting of the improvement plan team to provide technical assistance. The team leader is not typically the provider of trainings or professional development activities; however, the team leader may have suggestions regarding training or professional development providers.

The team leader will work with the district to make any necessary revisions. When all revisions are completed, the district will submit the final version to ISBE for approval by the team leader. Final approval of the improvement plan must be made within 60 calendar days from the date of the final report and the district will be issued an approval letter. The approval letter will also outline the schedule for reporting the district's progress to ISBE.

### **Progress Reports**

Upon receipt of each progress report and any required documentation, the ISBE team leader will review the report to ensure that the district is monitoring its own progress. Once any needed clarification is received, an approval letter will be issued. If it becomes evident that the district is not making progress that is likely to lead to the expected evidence of change within the required timeline, the team leader will schedule a meeting with the district to discuss the improvement plan.

### **Evidence of Correction Review**

The "Evidence of Correction" review is a meeting between the district representatives and the ISBE team leader to assess whether the district has met the required evidence of correction. The evidence of correction review takes place at the end of the first year of the focused monitoring process. This meeting occurs within 9-10 months from the

date of this final report. In accordance with 34 CFR 300.600(e), "... the State must ensure that when it identifies noncompliance with the requirements of this part by LEAs, the noncompliance is corrected as soon as possible, and in no case later than one year after the State's identification on noncompliance" (Dec. 2008). Based on the results of the meeting, ISBE will determine whether (1) the district has met the standards required for evidence of correction and officially close this section of the focused monitoring process, or (2) the district has not met the standards required and additional time will be permitted for the district to continue to work on their required evidence of correction. In the latter instance, the team leader will continue to provide technical assistance to the district.

## **VI. Closing the Focused Monitoring Process**

Focused monitoring is a two-year process. In order for districts to conclude this process, they must complete the requirements as specified in this final report for evidence of correction and evidence of change. The requirements for evidence of correction are addressed and monitored through the improvement plan process as discussed previously. The evidence of correction review takes place at the end of the first year of the focused monitoring process.

### **Evidence of Change Review**

The "Evidence of Change" review takes place at the end of the second year of the focused monitoring process. Evidence of change is designed to ensure that modifications have been made within the district that have ultimately led to improved performance on the indicator as reflected in the district's data. Two years after the date of this final report, the focused monitoring team leader will review the district's data to determine the degree of change in the data. The expected change in data is stated in this document. After review of the data, the team leader will submit a letter informing the district of the results of this data review. If the expected change is achieved, an approval letter will be submitted to the district which will close the focused monitoring process. If, however, the district does not achieve the expected change in data, the district will be informed in writing that further action is necessary. The team leader will continue to work with the district to determine the further action that will need to be carried out before the focused monitoring process can be officially closed.

## **VII. Summary**

In summary, the team leader will be available to participate in the initial meeting of the improvement plan process, as well as, to provide or facilitate on-going technical assistance regarding the activities identified in this report. Throughout the first year after the final report, the district's progress reports will be reviewed by the team leader to ensure improvements are being made. At the end of the first year, an "evidence of correction" meeting will occur with the district to review and determine whether or not all of the activities have been corrected within that first year. At the end of the second year, an "evidence of change" review will occur to ensure that the activities and modifications

made by the district have resulted in improved performance as reflected in the district's data.

If you have any questions, you may contact Kelly Wojcik at 217/782-5589.

