

Supporting the California Department of Education- Special Education Division Verification Review 2002-2003

Overview

During the 2002-2003 school year, SEEDS completed its third consecutive year of support to the CDE-SED in the area of Verification Reviews. Within this compliance review process, SEEDS facilitated Parent/Guardian Input meetings, conducted follow-up parent telephone interviews, and assisted in the review of infant and preschool student records. SEEDS also participated in state design teams assembled to develop and refine the verification review and educational benefit review process.

The 2002-2003 CDE Verification Review Workgroup included a member of the SEEDS staff who is a parent of a child with a disability. The Workgroup customized the Verification Review protocol by selecting districts and designing the monitoring plan according to district performance on the Special Education Division's Key Performance Indicators. Sixteen school district Verification Reviews were conducted in 2002-03. In addition, the Special Education Division worked in conjunction with the California Youth Authority (CYA) to review four sites. Two parent/guardian input meetings were held (one in Northern California and one in Southern California) for the CYA reviews.

SEEDS assisted CDE-SED with the design and pilot of a method to measure the educational benefit of special education as part of an outcome-based monitoring system. The U.S. Supreme Court's Rowley Decision, assuring the need for IEPs to be reasonably calculated to result in educational progress, is used as the definition of educational benefit. Questions related to educational benefit were incorporated into the

Parent/Guardian Input Session protocol. In addition, SEEDS staff participated with CDE-SED in piloting a process for reviewing student records to determine if IEPs were reasonably calculated. As further evidence of parent /professional collaboration, SEEDS staff co-presented with CDE –SED consultants on the topic of “Parent Involvement in Statewide Monitoring Systems” during a National Center on Special Education Accountability Monitoring (NCSEAM) meeting.

Format of Parent/Guardian Input Sessions

During the 2002-2003 monitoring year, the Parent/Guardian Input Sessions were scheduled several weeks in advance of the Verification Review. By using the input session as the opening activity for the verification review process, CDE-SED consultants were afforded sufficient time to incorporate the parent /guardian data into their monitoring plans.

In order to address the priorities of the CDE-SED, SEEDS annually modifies the protocol for conducting Parent / Guardian Input Sessions. The 2002-2003 list of parent/guardian questions used during the input sessions reflected concerns generated from several new sources of information. The data sources included:

1. The most frequent areas of non-compliance tabulated by CDE-SED in 2001-2002
2. Parent concerns most often reported from input meeting evaluations
3. Questions related to educational benefit.

The protocol was field tested by parents in the Sacramento area for clarity, relevance, and family-friendly language. The CDE-SED Verification Review workgroup made the final revisions to the protocol.

During the Parent /Guardian meetings, SEEDS disseminated community resource sheets listing numerous local and state sources of support for answering parent- guardian questions. The resource sheet included the contact information for the local school district's administrators, the Community Advisory Committee chairperson, the Parent Training and Information Center, the Family Resource Center, Protection and Advocacy, Inc., and the toll free phone number for CDE-SED's Procedural Safeguards unit.

As in past years, the local school districts were responsible for providing interpretation services for parents/guardians who do not speak English. The languages represented at 2002-2003 parent/guardian meetings included English, Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Farsi, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. As reported by parent moderators and FMTA consultants, the simultaneous system of interpretation continued to be the most effective interpretation method. SEEDS continues to be responsible for translating written materials into other languages. The brochure, describing the input meeting, was available in English and Spanish during the 2001-02 verification reviews. In 2002-03, the brochure was translated into Hmong, Korean, Hindi, and Punjabi. In 2003- 2004, SEEDS will access community resources to reproduce the brochure in Vietnamese and Mandarin.

Parent Moderators

During 2002-03, SEEDS worked with nine parent moderators. Using an individualized coaching method, each moderator was supported in co-facilitating the Parent/Guardian Input sessions. Two of the nine moderators are bi-lingual, speaking Spanish and English. Additional parent moderators, conversant in Asian languages, will be pursued during the 2003-2004-review year.

Data Collection and Analysis

CDE-SED utilized a variety of methods for collecting the parent/ guardian perspective during the input sessions. The sources include:

- consultant notes
- written comments authored by the parents
- the SEEDS moderator report listing topics and themes generated during the input session
- additional phone interviews conducted by SEEDS following the input session.

At the end of the 2001-02 reviews, SEEDS analyzed parent input data by coding comments into topics and themes. During the 2002-2003 verification year, parent comments were related, when possible, to items located within the CDE-SED compliance table. About one third of the comments did not align with these item numbers as they addressed additional topics or were too broad to match specific compliance citations. These non-categorized comments were reviewed in an attempt to extract additional common themes. The 2002-2003 data will be sent to CDE-SED and will be posted on the SEEDS website.

During the 2002-2003 verification year, SEEDS introduced a Parent/Guardian Comment sheet to be completed by participating family members at the end of each input meeting. Using a four point Likert-type scale, parents rated and then commented on their experiences in special education under the four topics covered at the meeting (listed below in bold). SEEDS received 215 Parent Comment forms from 13 parent/guardian meetings, containing 354 comments. This year's topics and responses were:

Topic: Positive experience with the IEP/IFSP meeting	
<u>Positive Rating: 70%</u>	<u>Negative Rating: 30%</u>
Strongly Agree: 20%, Agree: 50%,	Disagree: 19%, Strongly Disagree: 11%
<i>Sample Comments:</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our goals are included in the IEP. Definitive, measurable goals provided. 2. More time for modification discussion. 	

Topic: Student is successful at school	
<u>Positive Rating: 63%</u>	<u>Negative Rating: 36.5%</u>
Strongly Agree:16.5% Agree: 47%	Disagree: 24% Strongly Disagree:12.5%
<i>Sample Comments:</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have been fortunate to get all the help my son has needed. 2. I don't really feel they addressed my son's individual needs. 	

Topic: Positive experience with the secondary transition planning	
Positive Rating: 54%	<u>Negative Rating: 46%</u>
Strongly Agree: 16% Agree: 38%	Disagree: 24% Strongly Disagree: 22%
<i>Sample Comments:</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My son is 16 yrs old in 10th grade. We never had a transition plan. 2. We have not been offered this. She is 15. 	

Topic: Home language used in communication with district

Positive Rating: 75%	Negative Rating: 7%	Sometimes: 18%
<i>Sample Comments:</i> 1. I'd like to receive the IEP in Spanish. 2. At the other school they always provide me an interpreter but not at this school. 3. They are explaining more to us (Spanish).		

Of these responses, 226 of the 354 comments were coded with item numbers (64%) and 128 were coded by themes (36%).

SEEDS assisted the CDE-SED consultants by conducting telephone interviews with parents in selected districts. Given the customized nature of 2002-2003 reviews, the number of CDE-SED requests to SEEDS for this service varied. The Verification Review workgroup accepted the SEEDS recommendation that two weeks be allowed for completion of the interviews. SEEDS requested a list of 20 names from which to reach 10 families.

SEEDS examined telephone interview data from two districts, collecting comments from 17 parents. Of 61 comments analyzed, 42 were matched with item numbers (69%) and 19 were grouped with themes (31%).

Parent comments from meetings and phone interviews were matched with 47 items on the Compliance Item Table. The most frequent compliance item numbers associated with parent comments were:

<u>Parent Comments Matched with Compliance Items</u>				
Compliance Item#	Compliance Test	% Pos	% Neg	% of Total Comments
4-1-3 4-1-5	LEA provides services in accordance with the IEP LEA makes a good faith effort with goals and objectives	22	78	12

<i>Sample Comments:</i> 1. They don't work on what is in the IEP. 2. Provided as written—can see improvement.				
3-3-10.2	Parent concerns addressed at IEP meeting	46	54	11
<i>Sample Comments:</i> 1. I am made to feel as if my goals for her are unrealistic and I am harming her by keeping her as a full inclusion student. 2. We collaborated on goals.				
3-3-3	LEA ensures parent understanding of the IEP process	33	67	9
<i>Sample Comments:</i> 1. They don't respect when one asks for interpreter for translation of what happens in the IEP. 2. I do not understand it much (Spanish).				
3-2-5.4	Each teacher informed of specific responsibilities related to the IEP	47	53	9
<i>Sample Comments:</i> 1. Regular education teachers not prepared for special ed kids. 2. Teachers understand learning needs.				
3-2-3	Direct Relationship between present levels of performance, assessment information, and services.	50	50	7
<i>Sample Comments:</i> 1. Special day class worked but the subjects taught were too easy. 2. During the IEP, my child's best interest is always discussed and decisions are made on this, test results, and his areas of difficulty.				

Four percent of parents expressed concern regarding transition services. All other item numbers received less than one percent of parent comments.

The majority of parent ratings of the statements on the Likert scales were positive. However, the written comments carried a more negative tone. No conclusions can accurately be drawn from this finding at this time. A review of the data collection tools for bias is needed. Phone comments were more positive than meeting comments.

The most frequent themes addressed by parents through meetings and phone interviews (not aligned to compliance item numbers) were:

Theme: Support and Success	% Pos 49	% Neg 51	% of Total Comments 39
<i>Sample Comments:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For us the program has been a fabulous resource. 2. What can I do so my son has some enthusiasm for what he studies? 			
Theme: Student Progress	% Pos 36	% Neg 64	% of Total Comments 20
<i>Sample Comments:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He can't read nor write 2. We have been pushed through the system. 			
Theme: Home-School Communication	% Pos 64	% Neg 36	% of Total Comments 10
<i>Sample Comments:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For us the program has been a fabulous resource. 2. What can I do so my son has some enthusiasm for what he studies? 			

Overall, parents were equally divided on the support their children receive and the success they achieve. Most negative comments focused on students' progress, while most positive statements occurred within the area of home-school communication.

Summary

In examining all of the 415 parent comments, the most frequent topics addressed were:

1. Student support and success (14% of all comments)
2. Student progress (7% of all comments)
3. Services provided in accordance with the IEP (6.5% of all comments)
4. Parent concerns addressed in the IEP meeting (6% of all comments)
5. LEA ensures parent understanding of IEP proceedings (5% of all comments)
6. Each teacher informed of responsibilities related to the IEP (5% of all comments)

Of these topics, “Support and Success” consisted of the greatest number of positive comments (49%), and “Services provided in accordance with the IEP” contained the greatest number of negative comments (78%).

Limitations to this data include the small number of parents attending parent input meetings based on the total enrollment of students in special education.