

**KEENE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMING
PRESCHOOL – GRADE 5
SUMMARY REPORT
MAY 20, 2010**

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF STUDY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is an Executive Summary of the Special Education program review of Keene preschool services and the Keene elementary schools as commissioned with the Southeast Regional Educational Services Center (SERESC) in fall of 2009. This Executive Summary presents a brief summary of observations and specific recommendations that follow the content presented in greater depth in the body of the report.

The comprehensive report is presented in sections, each of which concludes with recommendations. The report should be read in-depth to appreciate the circumstance and discoveries that logically lead to the suggested recommendations that follow. It is important to note that the Executive Summary is forwarded with the understanding that the data and information referenced in the report may be subject to minor revisions due to errors in original data sources or incomplete information on specific aspects of the preschool or elementary programs.

Priority Recommendations:

Elementary Program Structure-- The inconsistent programmatic structure in Keene elementary education, to include that of special education programs and services, must be addressed to insure a consistent curriculum with consistent expectations for instruction leadership and protocol for assessment of student performance. This includes:

- A clearly defined expectation for Principal leadership in curriculum, instructional methodologies and assessment protocol for measurement of student performance (achievement),
- The creation of a measure of the consistency of the elementary curriculum through a planned and universal strategy to Map the curriculum,
- The adoption of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model throughout the district beginning at the elementary level,
- The development, publication and application of a supervisory model at the elementary level that is realistic, well informed and based upon measurable indicators of meeting district goals for student achievement.

- The adoption of a 'High Profile' Professional Development Program for all professional and support staff that supports the range of recommendations above.

Special Needs Collaborative--The Special Needs Collaborative model, including preschool, must be refined to insure that the scope of services are appropriate, referral procedures are thorough and individual student programs are monitored and evaluated by building level and district administrators. This includes:

- Pre-referral support and commitment to program delivery at the students/family's home school setting, if at all possible,
- The availability of professional support from specialists (Psychologists, OT,PT,Etc.) in the student's home school setting,
- The adoption of a model for interventions for students with unique learning or behavioral needs that is presented with aim of returning the student to their home school setting, if at all possible. The home school principal will hold primary responsibility for the student's placement and program.

Staffing Patterns--The staffing patterns for special education personnel at the elementary level is 'out of balance' and difficult to effectively manage or supervise. Attention must be given to the following:

- Increasing the number of certified elementary special education teachers and reducing the current level of elementary tutors. The addition of 4 teachers will advance the level of expertise and accountability for direct support to students and allow for a limited introduction of a co-teaching model,
- Charging the building principals with the development of a Supervisory Model for special education personnel at the elementary level that will insure a informed level of oversight, regular observation and planning, and a goal- based strategy with measurable objectives. The district must be prepared for a recommendation to expand supervisory personnel.
- Establish an elementary study group to advance the understanding and potential adoption of a "Professional Learning Community" model in each of the elementary schools. This model is seen as the most effective process for advancing a culture of collaboration and collective responsibility for student and family engagement at the elementary level.
- Charging the principals and special education administrators with investigating alternative models to the present model of special educators dedicating 1 day a week to meetings and development of IEP's etc. Alternatives to this model will allow for more direct instruction for students and collaboration with classroom teachers.

Data—The district and elementary schools lack the capability and capacity to advance the level of sophistication in data analysis that is critical to analysis of trends and patterns in curriculum, instruction and student assessments. Attention should be given to:

- Requiring the development of an inventory of current data sources for student and program performance and the methodologies used to inform decision-making for each.
- Establishing a Task Force to study the effectiveness of current methods of applying data to inform decisions in curriculum development, instructional methods and student placement and to review models successfully applied in other districts.
- Charge district and building administrators with developing and presenting a short and long-range plan for the use of data in all levels of decision-making,
- Insure sufficient support and knowledge is based at the district and building level to support increased access and application of data on student performance at the building level to include the establishment of building level data teams.

Preschool--The district must advance the stature and influence of the current Preschool Program. Consideration must be given to the following:

- Require that a preschool program description be developed prior to the beginning of the 2010-11 school year that includes a standards based curriculum that is tied to the Kindergarten and grades 1-3 curriculum.
- Insure the preschool program oversight and delivery is supervised effectively to insure program integrity and proper balance in student population. This should extend to a more formal connection to community based programs,
- The preschool referral and placement criteria should be reviewed and closely monitored to insure placement is within the range of accepted practice.

Improvement Model-The district must adopt a comprehensive model to address the recommendations in this report. The model should be characteristic of the elements of 'strategic planning' and should be directed by a Task Force composed of representative of the stakeholders who are impacted by any changes in the elementary school culture.

The Executive Summary is intended to be a synthesis of the findings in the comprehensive report. The consultants believe it is important to recognize that this effort will allow for a very credible educational setting to constructively advance the opportunities for learning for all students, and in particular students with unique learning challenges. The expanse of the report would not be possible without the cooperation and

genuine interest of the Keene School District and building level administrators, teachers, support personnel as well as parents and students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu". The script is cursive and fluid.

Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu, M. Ed.
Education Consultant

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard W. Ayers". The script is cursive and fluid.

Richard W. Ayers, Ed.D.
Education Consultant