



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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May 13, 2008

Dr. Richard Hoffman, Superintendent
Ashland Public School District
87 West Union Street
Ashland, MA 01721

Re: Mid-cycle Report

Dear Superintendent Hoffman:

Enclosed is the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Mid-cycle Report. This report contains findings based on onsite monitoring the Department conducted to determine the effectiveness of corrective action it approved or ordered to address noncompliance identified in your district's last Coordinated Program Review Report, dated April 21, 2004. The Mid-cycle Report also contains findings based on onsite monitoring of special education compliance criteria that have been created or substantially changed in response to IDEA 2004.

We are pleased to tell you that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has found the Corrective Action Plan implemented by your district to have been effective in remedying previously identified noncompliance in special education, civil rights and English learner education. The Department has also found your district to have implemented special education compliance criteria that were created or substantially changed in response to IDEA 2004, as well as SE 33 on the access of students with disabilities to the district's general curriculum (the curriculum expected to be taught to all students). The findings of the Department are included in the enclosed report. You and your entire staff are to be congratulated for your success in implementing new special education requirements as well as maintaining compliance in areas where the Department found noncompliance during the Coordinated Program Review (CPR).

The onsite team would like to commend the following programs and practices that were brought to its attention and that the team believes have a significant positive impact on the education of students enrolled in the Ashland Public School District. These programs and practices are as follows:

The district does a commendable job of notifying parents regarding assessment timelines. Notices include dates indicating when testing must be completed and when the Team meeting must be held. The district also sends all assessment reports home to parents prior to the Team meeting as a routine practice. In addition, the district sends a cover letter with all progress reports stating that the Team will reconvene if there is concern or evidence that the student is not progressing with his/her annual goals.

The district has expanded its programs and supports at the pre-school level to support instruction in the least restrictive environment. An ABA program for preschool aged students with autism was developed, and additional teaching assistants have been added to support children with autism in inclusion classrooms.

The district's grants and partnership with the Massachusetts Bay Community College to assist students with disabilities in transitioning to post-secondary education is commendable. The district has a counselor specifically assigned to assist with school to college transitions.

The Department will notify you of your district's next regularly scheduled CPR several months before it is to occur. At this time we anticipate that this CPR will occur sometime during the 2010-2011 school year, unless the Department determines that there is some reason to schedule this visit earlier.

Your staff's cooperation throughout this Mid-cycle Review is appreciated. Should you like clarification of any part of our report, please do not hesitate to contact me at 781-338-3761.

Sincerely,

Lynn A. Summerill, Mid-cycle Review Chairperson
Program Quality Assurance Services

Darlene A. Lynch, Director
Program Quality Assurance Services

c: Jeffrey Nellhaus, Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education
Marcia Reni, School Committee Co-Chairperson
John Blake, School Committee Co-Chairperson
Susan Gala, District Program Review Follow-up Coordinator

Encl.: Mid-cycle Report

**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION
MID-CYCLE REPORT**

Ashland Public School District

Date of Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Final Report: April 21, 2004

Date Coordinated Program Review Corrective Action Approved or Ordered: May 7, 2004

Dates of Corrective Action Plan Progress Reports: November 19, 2004, February 11, 2005, October 18, 2005, January 12, 2006, April 28, 2006

Dates of this Mid-cycle Review Onsite Visit: February 25-27, 2008

Date of this Report: May 13, 2008

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS REPORT IS IN SEVERAL SECTIONS.

Special Education Criteria Cited in CPR Report and Monitored in Mid-cycle

Current CPR criteria available by scrolling down to the monitoring instruments at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/default.html>

Criterion Number/Topic	Approved Corrective Action <u>Implemented and Effective</u> ✓	Method(s) of Verification	Basis of Determination that Corrective Action was Implemented and has been Effective	Corrective Action <u>Not Implemented</u> or <u>Not Effective</u> or <u>New Issues Identified</u> ✓	Basis of Determination that Implementation of Corrective Action was Incomplete or Ineffective or Basis of Finding of New Noncompliance	Required Corrective Action, Timelines for Implementation, and Progress Reporting
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SE 9 Eligibility determination	✓	Review of student records and interviews	Evaluations are conducted within appropriate timeframes and Team meetings are held within 45 school working days after receipt of the evaluation consent form. Parents leave Team meetings with a copy of the draft IEP with revisions. IEPs are consistently sent to parents immediately following Team meetings.			
SE 11 School district response to parental request for independent educational evaluation	✓	Review of documents and interviews	The district has procedures in place to process independent educational evaluations and respond to parents' requests within required timeframes.			
SE 18B Determination of placement; provision of IEP to parent	✓	Review of student records, documents and interviews	Teams are determining appropriate placements in the least restrictive environment consistent with the needs of the students. Placements are proposed immediately following the development of the IEP. Placements are not predetermined.			

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SE 20 Least restrictive program selection	✓	Review of student records, documents and interviews	The district offers a full continuum of services at all levels. Student placement is based upon individualized need.			
SE 21 School day and school year requirements	✓	Review of documents and interviews	The district closed the Ashland Alternative High School and created a new program called the Student Support Center that follows the same schedule as Ashland High School and meets all school day and school year requirements.			
SE 22 IEP implementation and availability	✓	Review of student records and interviews	Upon acceptance of an IEP, the school district provides the mutually agreed upon services without delay.			
SE 34 Continuum of alternative services and placements	✓	Review of student records, documents and interviews	The district provides for a continuum of alternative services and placements. The district offers vocational experiences both during and outside of the school day. Students also participate in school-to-work activities.			
SE 45 Procedures for suspension up	✓	Review of student records,	The district has written policies and procedures regarding suspension and exclusion that			

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to 10 days and after 10 days		documents and interviews	meet state and federal regulations.			
SE 51 Appropriate special education teacher certification/ licensure	✓	Review of documents	All special education teachers hold current and appropriate licensure.			
SE 55 Special education facilities and classrooms	✓	Classroom observations, review of documents and interviews	The district built a new high school in 2006 and currently has sufficient space for its resource rooms.			
SE 56 Special education programs and services are evaluated	✓	Review of documents and interviews	The district annually evaluates the effectiveness of its programs and services. Program evaluation is based on MCAS data, SIMS data, transition data, and parent and teacher surveys. Action plans based on these evaluation results are included in the district's five year Strategic Plan.			

Special Education Criteria Created or Revised in Response to IDEA-2004

Current CPR criteria available by scrolling down to the monitoring instruments at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/default.html>

Criterion Number and Topic	Criterion Implemented ✓	Method(s) of Verification	Basis of Determination that Criterion was Implemented	Criterion Partially Implemented or Not Implemented ✓	Basis of Determination that Criterion was Partially Implemented or Not Implemented	Required Corrective Action, Timelines for Implementation, and Progress Reporting
SE 3 Special requirements for determination of specific learning disability	✓	Review of student records, documents and interviews	The district is utilizing all required specific learning disability (SLD) forms. All Team members sign that they are in agreement or indicate if they are in disagreement with the Team's determination of SLD.			
SE 6 ##1 - 3 Determination of Transition Services	✓	Review of student records, documents and interviews	The district conducts comprehensive transition planning for students ages 15 and older, based upon student input. Vision statements, transition plans and IEPs are aligned and address post-school goals, including vocational training and employment options. The district received several grants and developed a pilot partnership with the Mass Bay Community College for providing academic support and accommodations for transitioning students. The district also has a post-school counselor to assist students and their parents with the college application and registration process, as well as to provide monitoring and student support.			

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SE 8 IEP Team composition and attendance	✓	Review of student records, documents and interviews	The district ensures that all required Team members attend Team meetings. The district appropriately documents parent excusals of Team members not in attendance.			
SE 12 Frequency of re-evaluation	✓	Review of student records and interviews	The district conducts full re-evaluations consistent with the requirements of federal law and conducts re-evaluations prior to the termination of services.			
SE 13 Progress reports and content	✓	Review of student records and interviews	At all levels progress reports address progress towards specific goals within the IEP. The district reconvenes the Team if a lack of progress is identified. The district provides summaries of academic achievement/functional performance for students who have graduated or exceeded the age of eligibility.			
SE 14 Review and revision of IEPs	✓	Review of student records and interviews	The district is issuing amendments consistent with state and federal requirements. The district is appropriately documenting amendments to IEPs between annual IEP meetings.			
SE 25B Resolution of disputes	✓	Review of student records	Within 15 days of receiving notice that a parent has made an official hearing request to the BSEA, the district convenes a			

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			resolution session in accordance with regulatory requirements.			
SE 33 Involvement in the General Curriculum	✓	Review of student records, documents and interviews	<p>The district implemented the following at the preschool level to support the least restrictive environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of an ABA program for students with autism; and - Additional teaching assistants to support children with autism in inclusion classrooms. <p>District staff understand the rights of students with disabilities to fully participate in the general curriculum.</p>			
SE 39A Procedures for services to eligible private school students whose parents reside in the district (SE 39A does not apply to charter schools or vocational schools)	✓	Review of documents and interviews	The district does not have any special education students in private school placements at private pay at this time. The district understands its obligation to calculate proportionate share of federal entitlement funds and to provide services to eligible private school students.			

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SE 39B Procedures for services to eligible students in private schools in the district whose parents reside out of state (SE 39B does not apply to charter schools or vocational schools)	✓	Review of documents	See SE 39A above.			
SE 46 Procedures for suspension of students with disabilities more than 10 days	✓	Review of student records, documents, and interviews	The district has written policies and procedures that are consistently implemented for conducting manifestation determinations and functional behavior assessments. These procedures meet state and federal regulations.			
SE 52 Appropriate certifications/licenses or other credentials – related service providers (to be reviewed)	✓	Review of documents	All related service providers are appropriately licensed. While the district does not currently employ a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing, the district is aware that transliterators must be registered with the MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.			

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only with respect to providers of interpreting services)						

Criteria from Other Regulated Programs Monitored During this Mid-cycle Review

Current CPR criteria available by scrolling down to the monitoring instruments at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/default.html>

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CR 10A Student handbooks and codes of conduct	✓	Review of documents	Student handbooks at all levels contain current discipline and suspension policies and procedures. The 2007-2008 faculty handbooks did not contain codes of conduct for teachers. However, the district has amended all handbooks and has disseminated codes of conduct to all staff members via email. A statement of assurance from the superintendent has been provided insuring that codes of conduct for teachers will be included in the SY 2008-2009			

			faculty handbooks.			
ELE 11 Equal Access to Academic Programs and Services	✓	Review of documents and interviews	The district ensures that all LEP students have equal access to all programs and services and has developed an appropriate ELE program. In addition, the district has developed an after-school homework program that meets three days a week for English language enrichment and is taught by licensed ELE teachers. The district provides late bus transportation for students in this program.			