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|  | ESE Logo | **COORDINATED PROGRAM REVIEW**  **MID-CYCLE REPORT**  **District:** **Fitchburg Public Schools**  **MCR Onsite Dates:** **12/13/2016 - 12/14/2016**  **Program Area: Special Education** |
|  |  | Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| COORDINATED PROGRAM REVIEW **MID-CYCLE REPORT** | | |

| **SE Criterion # 2 - Required and optional assessments** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records indicated that when the district conducts a re-evaluation, it completes an educational assessment by a representative of the school district, including a history of the student's educational progress in the general curriculum. In addition, the district completes an assessment by a teacher(s) with current knowledge regarding the student's specific abilities in relation to learning standards of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the district's general education curriculum, as well as an assessment of the student's attention skills, participation behaviors, communication skills, memory, and social relations with groups, peers, and adults. |

| **SE Criterion # 3A - Special requirements for students on the autism spectrum** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records and staff interviews indicated that whenever an evaluation indicates that a student has a disability on the autism spectrum, the IEP Team considers and specifically addresses the following:  1) the verbal and nonverbal communication needs of the student;  2) the need to develop social interaction skills and proficiencies;  3) the needs resulting from the student's unusual responses to sensory experiences;  4) the needs resulting from resistance to environmental change or change in daily  routines;  5) the needs resulting from engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped  movements;  6) the need for any positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to  address any behavioral difficulties resulting from the autism spectrum disorder; and  7) other needs resulting from the student's disability that impact progress in the general curriculum, including social and emotional development.  A review of student records also demonstrated that Teams use a checklist to gather information and guide IEP development. Areas of specific student need are addressed as goals and accommodations in the IEP. |

| **SE Criterion # 4 - Reports of assessment results** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records indicated that the district's assessment reports include diagnostic impressions and define in detail and in educationally relevant and common terms, the student's needs and offer explicit means of meeting them. |

| **SE Criterion # 7 - Transfer of parental rights at age of majority and student participation and consent at the age of majority** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records indicated that the district, one year prior to the student reaching the age of 18, informs both the parent and the student of the transfer of decision-making rights that will occur in relation to special education programs and services at the age of majority. |

| **SE Criterion # 8 - IEP Team composition and attendance** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records and staff interviews indicated that the district obtains a parent or guardian's written permission to excuse a required Team member's participation when that member cannot attend an IEP meeting. In addition, if the student is involved in a general education program, a general education teacher of the student is present at Team meetings. Staff interviews also indicated that a representative of the school district who has the authority to commit the resources of the district is present at Team meetings. |

| **SE Criterion # 9 - Timeline for determination of eligibility and provision of documentation to parent** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records and staff interviews indicated that within 45 school working days after receipt of the parent's written consent to an initial evaluation or a re-evaluation, the school district determines whether the student is eligible for special education and provides to the parent either a proposed IEP and proposed placement or a written explanation of the finding of no eligibility. |

| **SE Criterion # 13 - Progress Reports and content** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records and staff interviews indicated that progress reports are provided at least as often as parents are informed of the progress of non-disabled students, which consistently address student progress towards IEP goals.  A review of student records and staff interviews also indicated that where a student's eligibility terminates because the student has graduated from secondary school or exceeded the age of eligibility, the district provides the student with a summary of his or her academic achievement and functional performance, including recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his or her postsecondary goals. |

| **SE Criterion # 14 - Review and revision of IEPs** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records indicated that at least annually, on or before the anniversary date of the IEP, a Team meeting is held to consider the student's progress and to review, revise or develop a new IEP, or refer the student for a re-evaluation, as appropriate. Interviews indicated that IEP Teams consistently review and revise IEPs to address any lack of expected student progress towards the annual goals and in the general curriculum.  A review of student records and staff interviews also indicated that if the district and parent agree to make changes to a student's IEP between annual IEP meetings, the IEP Team is reconvened to amend the IEP. Parents are advised that they may request a complete copy of the amended IEP. |

| **SE Criterion # 18A - IEP development and content** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records and staff interviews indicated that upon determining that the student is eligible for special education, IEP Teams develop the IEP addressing all elements of the current IEP format provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Staff interviews indicated that the IEP is not changed outside of the Team meeting.  A review of student records also indicated that IEP Teams specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing for students whose disability affects social skills development, when the student's disability makes him or her vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing, and for students identified with a disability on the autism spectrum. |

| **SE Criterion # 18B - Determination of placement; provision of IEP to parent** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records and staff interviews indicated that IEP Teams develop the IEP prior to determining the appropriate placement to deliver the student's identified services and accommodations. Record review and staff interviews demonstrated that Teams consistently ensure that students are educated in the school she or he would attend if the student did not require special education, unless otherwise required by the IEP. Record review also demonstrated that placements are based on the IEP, including the types of related services, types of settings, types of service providers, and location where services are to be provided.  A review of student records and staff interviews also indicated that parents receive summary notes at the conclusion of the IEP Team meeting, which include a completed IEP service delivery grid describing the types and amounts of special education and related services proposed by the district and a statement of the major goal areas associated with these services. Records demonstrated that the district consistently sends two copies of the proposed IEP and placement within two calendar weeks of the Team meeting. |

| **SE Criterion # 24 - Notice to parent regarding proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the student or the provision of FAPE** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records and staff interviews indicated that whenever the district proposes an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education, an IEP or amendment, a placement, or other action, the district uses the Department's Notice of Proposed School District Action (N1) and Notice of School District Refusal to Act (N2). Record review demonstrated that notices consistently contain detailed narratives of the district's proposed actions, specifically: a description of the action the district proposed to take; a description of why the district took the action; a description of any other options that the district considered and the reasons why those options were rejected; a description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report used as a basis for the proposed action; a description of any other factors relevant to the district's decision; and a description of what steps, if any, the district proposed to take. |

| **SE Criterion # 26 - Parent participation in meetings** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records and staff interviews indicated that when neither parent can attend a Team meeting, the district uses other methods to ensure parent participation, including individual or conference telephone calls. The district’s efforts toward parent participation are documented in the student’s record.  The district provided its special education student roster as requested by the Department. |

| **SE Criterion # 29 - Communications are in English and primary language of home** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of student records, documents and staff interviews indicated that the district consistently communicates with parents in the primary language of the home if such primary language is other than English. In addition, if the district provides notices orally, the district keeps written documentation that it provided such notice in an alternate manner, the content of the notice, and the steps taken to ensure that the parent understood the content of the notice. |

| **SE Criterion # 41 - Age span requirements** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that at Fitchburg High School, the ages of the youngest and oldest student do not differ by more than 48 months in all Learning Center, Guided Learning, and Learning Perspectives classes. The Pathways classes (K, 1-2, 3-4) at South Street Elementary School have been reconfigured to ensure that groupings of the youngest and oldest student do not differ by more than 48 months. In addition, at McKay Arts Academy, the ages of the youngest and oldest student do not differ by more than 48 months in the K-2 Guided Learning class. |

| **SE Criterion # 53 - Use of paraprofessionals** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that paraprofessionals at the McKay Arts Academy only implement instruction for students with disabilities while under the supervision of an appropriately licensed professional who is proximate and readily available to provide such supervision. |

| **SE Criterion # 54 - Professional development** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that the content of training provided for paraprofessionals includes the following topics: 1) state and federal special education requirements and related local special education policies and procedures; 2) analyzing and accommodating diverse learning styles of all students in order to achieve an objective of inclusion in the general education classroom of students with diverse learning styles; and 3) methods of collaboration among teachers, paraprofessionals and teacher assistants to accommodate diverse learning styles of all students in the general education classroom. |

| **SE Criterion # 55 - Special education facilities and classrooms** |
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| **Rating:** |
| Implemented |
| **Basis for Findings:** |
| Staff interviews and observations indicated that at McKay Arts Academy, speech and language classes are no longer conducted simultaneously in the same classroom. Instead, each class is held in its own space. Additionally, in the McKay library, multiple instructional and related service activities are no longer conducted concurrently, including speech and language instruction, substantially separate special education classes, Computer Lab and morning staff meetings. This was remedied with the construction of walls to create two separate classrooms accessible from the main corridor, thus eliminating visual and auditory distractions for students.  Observations indicated that, at the South Street School, programs for students with autism in grades 1-2 and 3-4 are no longer clustered in the same location. The new locations, amongst grade level peers, reduce stigmatization and foster inclusion into the life of the school. The kindergarten resource room is no longer remotely located on one end of the school and the district created a new resource room for K, 1, and 2 students located amongst grade level peers. |