

Rhode Island Department of Education
Office of Special Needs

School Support System Report and Support Plan for the
Groden Center School
January 8 and 9, 2004

SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM

Introduction

The purpose of the School Support System (SSS) is to provide a means of accountability for delivery of programs and services for students with disabilities. The School Support System model is designed to promote the involvement of the whole school district, regular educators as well as special educators and parents. It is designed to learn if the district meets the minimum regulations and what effects the program and services have on student performance. Finally, the SSS develops a school support plan for training and technical assistance.

To accomplish this the SSS includes these components:

- The Orientation Meeting The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) staff meets with the Local Education Agency (LEA) to plan the site visit and identify issues or initiatives that may influence programs or service delivery.
- Data Analysis Meeting The RIDE staff meets to review LEA demographic information on selected reports including: the LEA annual plan, census information, and information collected through record review, staff questionnaires and parent interviews. To ensure that the child is at the center of the study, all analyses begin with the child. Thus, a sample of approximately 30 students with disabilities is selected; the records of these students are reviewed; their parents, teachers and related service providers are interviewed, and their classrooms are observed. The result is an in-depth, unified examination of the actual provision of programs and services for students with disabilities. The RIDE staff compiles a preliminary summary of their analyses of this data.
- Presentation by the LEA and School Site Review The site review begins with a presentation of programs by teachers and staff. The presentation provides the review team with general and specific information on delivery of programs and services to students. Following this presentation, visits to all schools are made. The team members interview school administrators and teaching staff. Parents and central office staff are also interviewed. The team gathers sufficient information and works with the LEA personnel to generate a report, covering the following:
 - The district's compliance with the state and federal regulations, relative to the education of students with disabilities.
 - The quality and effectiveness of programs and services provided by the district.
 - The need for professional development and technical assistance that will enable the LEA to improve programs and services.
- The Support Plan The RIDE team, LEA central office and building administrators meet to review the data and complete a report of results. The group designs a professional development/technical assistance support plan with timelines for implementation. This plan enables the school and district to correct areas of non-compliance and to strengthen promising programs and correct areas of weakness in order to improve services and programs for all students.
- The SSS Report The report summarizes the findings from the various data sources. The format of the report uses four divisions: Indicators, Findings, Documentation, and Support Plan. Indicators describe either performance or compliance. Findings can include a variety of some twelve categories, from school improvement to the least restrictive environment. The documentation section of the report distinguishes the source of the finding. The support plan reflects the response to the described findings. The support plan describes the corrective action required by the district as well as ways that RIDE will assist the district to improve programs and services.

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Groden Center
School Support System Review
January 8 & 9, 2004

Team A: Susan Wood, Rhode Island Department Education
Jane Keane, West Bay Collaborative
Mary Ellen Dubuc, Northern Rhode Island Collaborative

1. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	Strategic planning at the Groden Center is coordinated by one of the Executive Directors of the Center. The directors of the respective programs within the Groden Center developed a three-year plan to address the anticipated needs of the various programs. Each director and coordinator completes a needs assessment. Students are also surveyed as to their satisfaction with the school programs. Both surveys are used to inform the strategic planning process.	Document Review Interviews School Presentation		
Performance	2	The Groden Center Mission statement is as follows: "The Groden Day Program enhances the lives of children and youth with developmental disabilities, autism, behavioral disorders, and others at risk, and their families through provision of intensive learning and living environments where they can achieve a balance across all like skills that lead to a greater independence and inclusion."	Document Review Interviews School Presentation		

2. SCHOOL CLIMATE

Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	Teacher mentoring program is done via the Head Teacher's role. This person offers support to new teachers or teachers who may need additional support and/or curriculum review. There is also a wide array of informal mentoring done via special education teachers and treatment teachers.	Document Review Interviews School Presentation		
Performance	2	A variety of student groups occur at the Groden Center. Recently adolescents with Asperger's Disorder participated in a 12-week group therapy program. Students in the intermediate and high school age group have Career Groups that focused on career exploration. (See also Section 6: Transition).	Document Review Interviews School Presentation		
Performance	3	The Groden Center provides education and treatment of children and adolescents, ages 3-21 who have autism and associated serious behavioral disorders, and other developmental disabilities. Students attend the day program for at least 6 hours per day five days a week with some also attending the extended day and Saturday academic/ therapeutic programs. Services include a.) special education, b.) clinical programs, c.) specialized resources (speech and language, vocational education, behavior therapies, technology, d) multidisciplinary evaluation and consultation (behavioral and educational, psychology, social work, pediatrics, and physical and occupational therapy and e.) family support services. The staff that support the above services provide a warm, caring and student-focused environment.	Document Review Interviews School Presentation		

3. TEACHING PRACTICES					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	At the Groden Center there are a total of 11 special education teachers. Of that number seven are on emergency certificates. The remaining four individuals are certified special education teachers (see also Section 2: School Climate item #1)	Interviews Record Review		
Compliance	2	The position of occupational therapist was vacant for a period of 4 months time. This resulted in a number of students not receiving some of their school-based occupational therapy services. Subsequently, some families sought out private services during this time period. However, some family members interviewed were unsure what the protocols were for acquiring private services.	Interviews Record Review	The Special Education Director is in contact with the LEAs to work out interim occupational therapy services while Groden is in the process of procuring a full-time occupational therapist. The Special Education Director will work with all parents whose children receive occupational therapy to ensure that students are receiving current and missed services. Timeline: Immediately and ongoing until all missed services are provided.	A full time occupational therapist has been hired and will begin working on April 1, 2004.
Performance	3	The Curriculum Development Team comprised of Supervisors and Directors with input from teachers review all curriculum on an ongoing basis. There is a Curriculum Center where staff can access curriculum materials on an as need basis. The Coordinator(s) of the Curriculum Center also review and apply for a variety of curriculum related grants.	Presentation Document Review		
Performance	4	Detailed Behavior Reports (DBR) are utilized to describe, plot and examine student behavioral patterns. This information is used to implement positive behavioral interventions.	Presentation Document Review District Presentation		

Performance	5	The In-Home Support and Training (IST) program is designed to provide service in a flexible manner that is individualized to meet the needs of the family in their own home. The focus of the program is three-fold: 1.) to provided instruction and behavior management to the students that will increase that individuals' adaptive behaviors, 2.) to assist the family in the care of their child, thus reducing their stress of caring for a child with serious developmental disabilities; and 3.) to teach the family strategies that will enable then to more effectively interact and care for their child.	Interviews Document Review		
Performance	6	Another program targeting therapeutic foster care is called The Professional Family Living Arrangement (PFLA). It is a voluntary program that provides both short and long term placement for students in the homes of specially trained individuals and couples. The PFLA provider can work directly with the child's family, assisting in structuring a home environment to facilitate the successful integration of the child into the family. Alternately, some placements are more permanent.	Interviews Document Review		

4. FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE) IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	<p>Students are placed in classes/units according to their age, cognitive and social characteristics and program focus.</p> <p>The staff includes a special education teacher who provides special education services as well as two-to-four treatment teachers who typically have a bachelor's degree in a human service field.</p> <p>Classes/units are supported by three groups of individuals that are responsible for assistance in the administration and programming of the units. These include:</p>	<p>Document Review Interviews School Presentation</p>		

	<p>Supervisors. Each class/unit is assigned a Unit Supervisor who provides both administrative and clinical oversight.</p> <p>Administrative responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supervise all aspects of personnel -Students and staff procedural guidelines -Community liaison activities <p>Clinical responsibilities include supervising the development implementation and assessment of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Individual Program Plans -Individual Program Overview -Instructional programs -Intervention descriptions -Progress reports -Family communication <p>Clinical Directors. Each class/unit is assigned a Clinical Director who provides support and directions to the Unit Supervisor and staff regarding the clinical program of the students. Their responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clinical direction of the students in therapeutic programs -Behavioral evaluations -Weekly observations of staff implementing programs -Clinical support as need to the Unit Supervisors <p>Resource Specialists. Additional resource support is provided to the units by individuals from specialist teams, including intake evaluations, family services, speech and language, vocational service, technology support, staff training, relaxation and imagery services and licensed consultation. Specialists are assigned to the unit for regular programming support.</p>			
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Performance	2	<p>The Groden Center program continuum is comprised of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An integrated preschool setting which is currently comprised of five typically developing peers and seven children with IEPs. There are a variety of community experiences that the children participate in. <p>The school age students are divided into three teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Three Team I classes that focus on the elementary school age students Three Team II classes that focus on the intermediate school age students Four Team III classes that focus on the high school age students. <p>A pediatric physician provides consultation services to the clients. This service does not replace the ongoing medical and dental care provide by the family. A full-time nurse is on-site to administer medication and attend to the physical health needs of the students.</p> <p>Special education services include individualized programming in area such as readiness skills, written and spoken language, mathematics, science, social studies, everyday living skills, socialization and leisure.</p> <p>The speech and language pathologist and treatment teachers attempt to remediate communication problems ranging from disorders at the prelinguistic level to high level language disorders of content, form and use.</p>	<p>Document Review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>School Presentation</p>		
Performance	3	<p>Groden Center also has a Family Service Department that works with all families and students. This provides a link between the day program and home to help parents with a better understanding of what the teachers/staff are doing</p>	<p>Document Review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>School</p>		

		with students including learning the various terms and terminology. The Family Service Department works with families to teach them the skills, models and provide follow-up so parents can feel competent working with their children. Training workshops are offered so parents can learn to do their own behavioral analysis and life skills programs. Topical trainings are selected based on parent needs and requests. These include a wide range of topics including transitions, guardianship, family relationships, adult services information, social security etc. Family Services works closely with day program staff to assist them in understanding family perspectives and feelings. A satisfaction survey is sent out on an annual basis to see what parents are interested in and this in turn, informs the various trainings and professional development opportunities (see also Section 7: Parent Involvement)	Presentation		
Performance	4	The Saturday Therapeutic Program is designed to provide a learning experience within a framework of therapeutic activities. It allows students increased opportunities for practice of and generalization of academic skills through involvement in seasonal community activities such as bowling, swimming, Special Olympics, visiting parks, and zoos, picnics, sleigh riding and community walks. The Saturday Program continues to stress one of the Groden's centers most important goals, to foster communication skills, specifically in social interaction with peers and adults. This goal is accomplished through a variety of language programs that includes both small and large group activities that stress the presence of other people in the environment and require some form of independence.	Document Review Interviews School Presentation		

5. EVALUATION/ INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	The Groden Center designs Individual Education Programs for each student. These plans are developed in coordination with the clients day program. IEP objectives are assessed continuously using data-based strategies. Each program is designed towards the individual needs of the student. There is a structured written protocol delineating the activity, person responsible and timeline for completion for all IEP related activities.	Document Review Interviews School Presentation		
Performance	2	There is an IEP draft-planning meeting held prior to the IEP meeting. The parent(s) is invited to this meeting to discuss the student's progress and plan for the upcoming IEP meeting.	Document Review Interviews School Presentation		
Performance	3	Every student has a "Program File Box" located in his/her classroom. Each file has a system of color-coated files designed to organize student work, contact information and behavioral charts. Task objective sheets are related to short-term IEP goal. It serves as a lesson plan for activities to accomplish a given set of activities and is very comprehensive. A copy of the students IEP annual goal sheets and the data sheets are also in the Program File Box . Imagery and relaxation techniques are used to assist students to internally monitor their behaviors (self-control). This is an ongoing learning and monitoring process.	Presentation Document Review		

6. TRANSITION					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	<p>There are written structured protocols outlining the various transition guidelines and activities for a myriad of transition situations. The protocols are comprehensive and indicate who is responsible for what activities and the suggested timelines for completing said activities. All proposed transitions involve an IEP meeting(s). There are also specific Groden Center informational forms that accompany the student's folder for all transitions. The transition situations include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Transition procedures within the Groden Center. 2.) Transition procedures to another Groden Center program 3.) Transition to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) or alternative programs 4.) Transition procedures to adult services 	<p>Document Review Interviews</p>		
Performance	2	<p>There is Transition Coordinator who is the Center's transition point person at all IEP meetings and is responsible for transition planning and programming. There is also a Vocational Coordinator who is charged with vocational assessments, job procurement and placements. Students typically begin vocational experiences in the vocational work area at Groden Center. As their interest and abilities are honed they are placed in outside work experiences. These include the Groden Center Greenhouse, Block Buster Video, local business, Meals on Wheels, Amica Insurance, PharmaCare etc.</p>	<p>Interviews Document Review</p>		

7. PARENT INVOLVEMENT					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	There is a parent group called the "Parents and Friends Association" that meets on a monthly basis. Trainings and workshops are often incorporated into their monthly meetings. During all parent events respite is provided so parents can attend the meetings. In some cases, if parents cannot attend a training staff will go to the parent's home to provide trainings, videos , or general information etc. A newsletter is mailed three times a year to all parents detailing trainings and programs available to parents. The group has evolved over time to become a strong parent support and advocacy group. (see also Section 4: FAPE/LRE, box #2)	Document Review Interviews School Presentation		

8. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	Professional development experiences must be job embedded. This school year staff reported participating in a myriad of on-site training opportunities.. Some of these include the following: -Behavior Analysis and Change -Behavior Intervention Protocols -Autism -Sensory Integration -Client Rights: Philosophy and Practices -Environmental Safety (Emergency and Fire Safety) -Health and Safety -Infection Control -Personnel Procedures -Professional assault response training -Safe Driving	Interviews Document Review		

		-First Aid and CPR -Sexual Harassment/All Harassment -Cultural Diversity			
Performance	2	New staff are required to participate in a series of trainings designed to acquaint them with the working of the Groden Center and an introductory/refreshers on applied behavior analysis and the data systems utilized. Teachers can also access professional development opportunities outside of the Groden Center by requesting approval to participate from the Special Education Director. The criteria for attendance is that professional development be job related.	Interviews Document Review		
Performance	3	Staff can receive tuition reimbursement for college courses (undergraduate and graduate). They receive 100% reimbursement for pursuing courses in special education. There is a 50% reimbursement for related programs (psychology, social work etc.) Staff reported this as a positive and appreciative incentive.	Interviews		

9. FACILITIES					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	The Groden Center facilities appeared to be clean and appropriate to meet the need of students and staff. There is no "extra" space and staff are continuously reviewing space needs and planning to maximize the space they currently have. If the student numbers rise then they will have to explore expansion and/or alternative space opportunities.	Interviews Observation		

