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State Superintendent of Public Instruction



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June 12, 2009

Sandy Husk, Superintendent
Salem-Keizer School District
2450 Lancaster Drive NE
Salem, Oregon 97305

Dear Superintendent Husk:

This letter serves as the final report of the Oregon Department of Education's (ODE) monitoring of the 2008-2009 Corrective Action Plan for Salem-Keizer School District's Talented and Gifted (TAG) programs and services. This report includes background information, a summary of findings, and a detailed response to each corrective action item.

Background Information

The Superintendent of Public Instruction found the Salem-Keizer School District (SKSD) to be noncompliant with OAR 581-022-1320 and 581-022-1330 in March 2008. In response, SKSD has been implementing its ODE-approved Corrective Action Plan during the 2008-2009 school year. Staff from the Oregon Department of Education began reviewing documentation of district progress in March 2009. Additionally, onsite monitoring occurred in May 2009.

Summary of Findings

ODE has determined that compliance with the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) has been demonstrated. Many of the corrective action items have been implemented exceptionally well. Other corrective action items have been implemented at a minimal standard to demonstrate compliance, but may need additional attention and refinement in order for the district to remain in compliance in the future.

Detailed Response

Below is a summary of the specific items of corrective action. Included is a clarification of the evidence used to determine compliance and specific commendations and recommendations.

1. Assign responsibilities for corrective action processes and timelines to specific individuals.

ODE has determined that the district has met its obligation for this corrective action item based on the evidence found in the other areas of the Corrective Action Plan.

2. Establish a procedure for clear written notice on at least an annual basis to all parents of TAG children concerning the parents' rights to provide input to and discuss with the District the TAG programs and services to be received by their child. The procedure must ensure that the district offers an opportunity for parents to provide input and to discuss their child's TAG program with a representative of the District (this can be a teacher, building TAG Advocate, building administrator, or district TAG staff member).

Below is a table that shows the ODE-accepted corrective action items and the corresponding evidence used to demonstrate compliance with each item.

Corrective Action Item	Verified Evidence
Send home a district TAG newsletter periodically throughout the year	Letter of introduction 8/25/09 TAG News 09/2008, 12/2008, 4/2009, and 6/2009
Review and update the district TAG website with relevant information	Updates have been added including a survey asking stakeholders what they would like to see on the S-K TAG website
Send home letters to parents annually explaining individual school process for parent input	Reviewed samples of the letters sent home to parents
Offer parent evening workshops on TAG topics and include time for input and discussion	Seven parent workshops were held with topics including a TAG 101 introduction, helping students study, and gifted identity and the role of the parent
Establish a TAG Advisory Council with parent members	Meeting calendar, member list, and meeting minutes
Use of course syllabi and course plans to provide information to parents about secondary TAG accommodations	Reviewed samples of syllabi and course plans for evidence of TAG accommodations
Incorporate the use of a TAG Parent Input Form	Reviewed the form and evidence of its use in buildings

In addition to the evidence listed above, in a parent survey of a sample group of SKSD TAG parents, the majority of parents reported that they are “informed of TAG programs and services available to my student.” The majority of parents also reported that they “were given an opportunity to give input into my student’s TAG plan.”

Commendations

ODE would like to commend the district on its use of a TAG Advisory Council. This approach allows for an avenue for ongoing two-way communication between stakeholder groups. It also provides parents with an opportunity to extend their input to a systemic district level. ODE would also like to commend the district on its inclusion of parent evening workshops. The topics addressed were pertinent to TAG parents, and these types of ongoing educational opportunities can only strengthen the home-to-school connection.

Recommendations

Although the district has demonstrated minimal compliance for this corrective action related to parent communication and input, there are still two areas that require further attention. The first issue relates to parent input. 66% of elementary parents surveyed said they had been given an opportunity to give input into their child’s TAG plan of instruction, but only 47% of secondary parents said they had been given an opportunity to provide input. ODE recommends that SKSD continue to review its internal procedures for communication and work to improve this process.

The second issue relates to communication of TAG accommodations in the classroom. Approximately 40% of parents surveyed agreed that “Assessments are used by my student’s teachers for planning level and rate of instruction.” Another ~40% of parents answered that they “weren’t sure” if assessments were used. However, when ODE staff conducted interviews, 100% of the teachers interviewed were able to clearly articulate specific examples of pre-assessments that they use to determine TAG students’ level of learning and formative assessments they use to determine TAG students’ rate of learning. Additionally, ODE staff observed numerous teachers using pre-assessments and formative assessments during random drop-in classroom observations.

It appears that clearer communication to parents about the exact assessments and accommodations that are being used in classrooms for TAG students is needed. In fact, in a review of course syllabi, about 40% contained evidence of clear and specific TAG accommodations. A review of course plans showed that about 76% contained evidence of specific assessments that would be used for determining rate and level of instruction for TAG students.

The syllabi are sent home for parent review and comments. The course plans are not currently sent home for review, but parents can access them anytime they want in the school office. ODE recommends that SKSD implement a system whereby the specific pre-assessment information from the course plans is incorporated into the course

syllabi. This would streamline that communication process and would help parents have easier access to a more complete description of the TAG accommodations being made in each classroom. Rolling the two documents into one would also eliminate redundant paperwork. Additionally, ODE recommends that SKSD develop a system to review course syllabi for specific evidence of TAG assessments and accommodations and work with individual teachers to refine their communication in the course syllabi.

3. Develop systems of accountability that ensure administrators, TAG staff and teachers provide the appropriate instruction at rate and level of learning for TAG students. Require all teachers to document:

a. the students assigned to them who are TAG identified and the student's identification category;

During ODE staff interviews with SKSD teachers, 100% of teachers were able to identify who their TAG students were. They were also able to describe the areas in which the students were identified. Teachers were able to describe the methods they used to document this information. Many teachers also showed the interviewers the physical documents they use to track this information.

b. how the individual student's rate and level of learning is determined in the particular class; and

As stated above, 100% of teachers were able to describe in detail how they use pre-assessments to determine TAG students' level of learning and formative assessments to determine TAG students' rate of learning. Several teachers also showed the interviewers physical documents they use to track this information. Additionally, during random observations, ODE staff saw pre-assessments and formative assessments being used in SKSD classrooms.

c. the differentiated instruction provided for the individual TAG student that is based on the student's level of learning and rate of learning. Documentation need not be complex but it must be sufficient to allow the District to monitor compliance with TAG requirements. Compliance with the District's documentation policy is one way to meet this responsibility.

During ODE staff interviews with SKSD teachers, approximately 91% were able to explain strong examples of differentiated instruction they have used this year for TAG students. The remaining 9% of teachers were able to provide minimal examples of differentiated instruction for TAG students. Teachers shared many specific examples of actual assignments and materials that are differentiated for TAG students. Teachers

also shared the various ways that they document this information. During random, one-time classroom observations, strong examples of differentiated instruction were observed in approximately 53% of lessons and evidence of minimal differentiated instruction was observed in an additional 13% of lessons.

E-survey information from an additional sample of teachers not included in the interviews or observations confirmed the evidence listed above.

Commendations

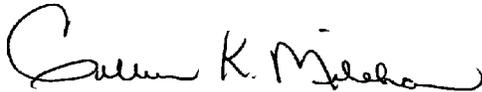
During classroom observations and teacher interviews, ODE observed many examples of strong instructional practices. There were numerous examples of advanced and rigorous curricula as well as solid instructional and assessment practices. ODE strongly encourages SKSD to identify master teachers in each of its buildings and consider involving those individuals in the work of growing best practice strategies for student achievement in all classes.

Recommendations

In general, the amount and extent of differentiated instruction seems to be more ingrained into instruction in the electives, foreign language, science, social studies, and language arts. Based on interviews and observations conducted during this CAP review, math classes appear to have fewer accommodations or differentiation for TAG students. ODE encourages SKSD to investigate this matter more deeply and identify leaders in mathematics instruction in the district and actively work to improve instructional practices in this area if needed.

ODE would like to thank Ricki Schuberg-Myers, the TAG office staff, and the building principals and teachers for their ongoing professionalism and courtesy. Please contact Stacey Figgins at stacey.figgins@state.or.us or (503) 947-5701 if you have any questions or need additional technical assistance.

Sincerely,



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cc: Ricki Schuberg-Myers, Salem-Keizer School District