



Division for Exceptional Students

1870 Twin Towers East

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

404-656-3963

Fax: 404-651-6457

February 16, 2006

FOCUSED MONITORING REPORT

Reducing the Achievement Gap in Mathematics
Between Students With and Without Disabilities

Clayton County School System

Dr. Barbara Pulliam
Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Brenda Keegan/Ms. Tamera Foley
Directors of Special Education

Introduction and Statutory Authority

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees a free and appropriate public education to students with disabilities. The IDEA provides federal funds to assist states in carrying out this responsibility and to comply with the associated regulations. 34 CFR Section 300.600 of the IDEA requires that states ensure that local systems comply with federal regulations and meet the state's educational standards as they provide educational programs for students with disabilities. The Division for Exceptional Students (DES) of the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) provides this general supervision and monitoring of local systems through a variety of activities identified as Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP).

GCIMP is composed of multiple means for monitoring the local systems' provision of a compliant and quality education for students with disabilities. These include, but are not limited to, evaluation of timelines for entry into special education, student record review, dispute resolution, system improvement plans, data profiles, and Focused Monitoring. A manual was distributed to all system special education directors in the spring of 2004 detailing the components of GCIMP.

The State Advisory Panel for Special Education serves as the stakeholder committee for the DOE and advises the state on the development and implementation of the GCIMP including Focused Monitoring. For Focused Monitoring, the stakeholders reviewed the state data on each of the ten performance goals and determined that the state priority goal for the FY06 (2005-2006) school year would be closing the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities. Once the priority was identified, the CRCT results for all systems were reviewed, compared to systems with similar size special education populations, and ranked within the similar size groups. Those systems with the largest average gap in achievement between students with and without disabilities in grades 3 through 8 in either reading or mathematics were selected for Focused Monitoring. A total of 20 systems were identified for Focused Monitoring in FY06. For more details on the selection of systems, refer to the section of the GCIMP manual on Focused Monitoring.

Focused Monitoring

Clayton County School System was selected for Focused Monitoring in the area of mathematics because the data placed the system in the lowest quartile when compared to other systems in the size group A (3000 or more students with disabilities). The purpose of the Focused Monitoring site visit to Clayton County School System was to identify reasons why the gap in mathematics achievement remains large and to begin to assist the system to identify strategies that decrease the achievement gap, thereby improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

The Monitoring Team

The DOE authorized the following team of monitors and consultants to conduct on-site monitoring in the Clayton County School System from January 10-13, 2006:

- Charlene Boykins, Team Leader, Division for Exceptional Students, DOE
- Lynn Holland, District Liaison, Division for Exceptional Students, DOE
- Kristina Brooks, Consultant, Division for Exceptional Students, DOE
- Jan Stevenson, Consultant, Division for Exceptional Students, DOE
- Deborah Keane, Consultant, Division for Exceptional Students, DOE
- Frank Nesbit, Consultant, Division for Exceptional Students, DOE
- Wina Low, Special Education Administrator, Carrollton City School System
- Rebecca Kelly, Special Education Administrator, Bryan County School System
- Judi Kelley, Special Education Administrator, Cedarwood Psychoeducational Center
- Diann Kelly, Parent of a student with a disability
- Patricia Borrero-Samuel, Parent of a student with a disability

Data Related to Focused Monitoring

The most recent CRCT data (Spring 2005) was used to identify the gap in mathematics achievement. The data used was as follows:

Spring 2005	Students without disabilities meeting and exceeding	Students with disabilities meeting and exceeding	GAP between students with and without disabilities
3-8th grade	74 %	37 %	37 %

A review of the data shows that when Clayton County School System is compared with the 12 other systems in the same size group, it is in the bottom quartile for the gap in mathematics achievement. A review of previous years' data also shows that the gap in mathematics was large. As part of the Focused Monitoring activities, the Improvement Plan submitted by the system for FY 2006 was reviewed. The Clayton County School System does have an Improvement Plan goal that targets the achievement gap. The system will be required to revise this plan with targets using the findings contained in this report in its efforts to move forward in closing the achievement gap. Using the CRCT results from the 2006-07 school year, the system's progress in meeting the target set for reducing the gap will be reviewed. Systems that fail to meet those targets within two years and fail to meet compliance criteria within one year may be subject to sanctions from the DOE.

Additional Data

Prior to the on-site visit, available and related data were reviewed and considered. Data reviewed included:

- Focused Monitoring survey from 159 professionals
- Focused Monitoring survey from 271 parents of students with disabilities
- System Data Profiles
- Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Improvement Plans
- System special education budget
- Individual school test and enrollment data

On-site Process and Activities

The on-site activities of Focused Monitoring occurred January 10-13, 2006. During that time the following activities took place:

- Conducted a parent meeting with 86 attendees
- Conducted a parent drop-in session with 27 attendees
- Conducted a local stakeholders meeting with 26 attendees
- Visited 25 schools
- Conducted 6 classroom observations
- Interviewed 21 general education teachers
- Interviewed 57 special education teachers
- Interviewed 7 parents
- Interviewed 15 students
- Interviewed 17 principals and 9 assistant principals
- Interviewed 2 interpreters
- Interviewed 4 special education lead teachers/consultative teachers
- Interviewed 4 central office personnel including 1 coordinator of psychological services, 1 math supervisor, 2 directors of special education
- Reviewed 28 student special education records
- Reviewed individual student test data
- Reviewed the following information provided by the Clayton County School System:
 - Improvement Plans for the system and for individual schools
 - Professional Learning plans
 - Clayton County Balanced Scorecard
 - Test Data for Elementary Schools Not Making AYP
 - CRCT Data for Spring 2005 - Clayton County Middle School Report
 - Special education teacher rosters
 - Special education student schedules
 - *Special Education News* newsletters
 - Special Education Services Survey Results

Summary of On-Site Findings

The monitoring team found systemic noncompliance in two areas as follows:

1. A free appropriate public education (FAPE) is not provided to some students with disabilities.
 - Some students with disabilities do not have access to the general curriculum.
 - Appropriate, individualized accommodations are not provided for instruction and assessment to some students with disabilities.
2. Some students with disabilities are not educated with students who are not disabled, to the maximum extent appropriate. A full continuum of placement options is not always considered by IEP teams.

ON-SITE FINDING NO. 1

A free appropriate public education (FAPE) is not provided to some students with disabilities.

- Some students with disabilities do not have access to the general curriculum.
- Appropriate, individualized accommodations for instruction and assessment are not provided to some students with disabilities.

Description of Findings of Noncompliance:

Many students with disabilities are not receiving instruction in the grade level mathematics curriculum or standards. Instead, many are only being taught lower grade level mathematics based on results from assessments other than the standardized achievement tests.

Some students do not receive the accommodations for instruction and testing that are specified in their IEPs.

Applicable Regulations:

34 CFR 300.300
34 CFR 300.304

Supporting Evidence:

- Professional interviews indicate that many of Clayton County's resource and self-contained special education teachers are not trained or certified to teach grade level mathematics. Some stakeholders and parent meeting participants feel that students with disabilities are not achieving well due to a lack of instructors trained in the area of mathematics.
- Principal and teacher interviews indicate that many general education instructors do not differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- Record reviews, professional interviews, parent surveys, and parent meeting participants reveal that accommodations are noted on IEPs and shared with teachers, but are not consistently provided in the general education setting. Additionally, many of the accommodations appear to be generic and not selected to address the needs of individual students.
- Professionals interviewed and parent meeting participants indicate that some students with disabilities are routinely suspended or sent home from school early due to behavior problems. Many in-school suspensions are given without IEP services, according to professional interviews.

Supporting Evidence (continued):

- Professional interviews reveal that some elementary school resource classes do not consistently hire substitute teachers when resource teachers are absent. Instead, resource classes are cancelled and students are then assigned to general education teachers for the day resulting in failure to implement the IEP.
- Professionals report that standardized test scores are not systematically used to make decisions about instructional programming.
- Professionals report that many special education teachers are teaching below grade level and not exposing students to the grade level curriculum.
- Teachers reported that some co-taught, collaborative and small group classes contain too many students with disabilities per class for instruction to be effective.
- Special education teachers reported that they receive teachers' editions of system-wide textbooks, but some stated that they do not have the supplemental resource materials provided to general education teachers.

Comments and Discussion:

Many students with disabilities who did not achieve proficiency on the 2005 administration of the CRCT received passing grades in mathematics classes. This may be the result of students not being taught grade level curriculum in the special education setting. In addition to the grade level mathematics instruction, many students with disabilities require additional individualized instruction to address deficits and skill gaps. Students with disabilities will continue to lag behind their grade level peers without access to grade level curriculum. Many special education teachers need professional development and support in the teaching of mathematics.

The provision of accommodations for instruction and assessment is essential to the provision of a free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities. Accommodations must be individualized and directly linked to the student's disability, as documented in the IEP. Training, support and supervision are needed for all teachers in differentiating instruction and providing accommodations so that all students have access to the general curriculum.

Required Evidence of Change:

IEPs that document students with disabilities receiving instruction in grade level mathematics. IEPs that list appropriate, individualized testing and instructional accommodations which enable students to access the general curriculum.

ON-SITE FINDING NO. 2

Some students with disabilities are not educated with students who are not disabled, to the maximum extent appropriate.

- A full continuum of placement options is not always considered by IEP teams.

Description of Findings of Noncompliance:

Many professionals admit to a lack of understanding of the continuum of special education services available. Many special education placement decisions for mathematics instruction are not based on individual student needs, but are based on categories of exceptionalities or predetermined requisite skills.

Applicable Regulations:

300 CFR 300.550, 551, 552

Supporting Evidence:

- Professionals interviewed indicated that scheduling for students with disabilities is done after schools create their master schedules, which limits co-teaching possibilities.
- Professionals, stakeholders, and parents indicated that some general education teachers do not have the strategies necessary to work with students with disabilities.
- Co-teaching has been implemented on an inconsistent basis system-wide. Class schedules and professional interviews indicate that co-teaching is not occurring at some elementary schools.
- Professionals interviewed state that only students with disabilities who can compute without calculators are placed in collaborative or small group settings. Professional interviews and class schedules indicate that students with mild intellectual disabilities do not routinely participate in collaborative classes; many are automatically placed in resource or self-contained settings.
- Some professionals interviewed commented that there is an unwritten practice where the general education or co-taught setting is only considered for students who are functioning no more than one grade level below expectancy. Those who are two grade levels below are only considered for instruction in the special education setting.
- Professional interviews indicate that students with disabilities in kindergarten have limited interaction with kindergarten students who are not disabled.
- Professional interviews indicate that there is limited collaboration at the high school level.

Comments and Discussion:

Some Clayton County IEP teams do not base placement decisions on the presumption that special education services will be provided in the general education classrooms, with accommodations and supports, to the maximum extent appropriate. Many special education teachers voiced the opinion that students with disabilities should be taught in the special education setting and the general education setting is not always considered. This is an apparent contradiction to the mandate that special education services will be provided in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. Once students with disabilities are categorized and placed in special education, expectations for them are lowered as evidenced by CRCT data.

In middle schools where discipline is a major issue, students with disabilities who have discipline problems are removed from general education classes and placed in special education in lieu of devising means to deal with individual and schoolwide discipline concerns. Effective Behavioral and Instructional Supports (EBIS), an initiative through the DOE, was initiated but is not being implemented at some schools. It was noted that schools that consistently implement EBIS with fidelity have fewer discipline concerns and focus on academic achievement.

Professional learning to address decision-making for placement in the least restrictive environment, differentiated instruction, and accommodations is recommended for teachers and administrators. Training on scheduling special education students in general education settings at the building level is also recommended.

Required Evidence of Change:

Documentation that a full continuum of placement options is considered by IEP teams. IEPs that reflect placements in the full continuum of services for mathematics instruction.

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS

The DOE strongly urges the school system to examine the following concern and take steps to resolve the issue as appropriate:

The participants at Clayton County School System's stakeholders meetings have been mostly Special Education Services staff members and parents. The system is encouraged to solicit participation from more general education teachers, administrators and community agencies on its stakeholders committee.

Significant discipline issues are apparent in some schools, particularly middle schools. Suspensions--both in and out of school--and early dismissals result in a lack of exposure to valuable classroom instruction. Alternate strategies for suspensions and proactive approaches to discipline--such as increased implementation of Effective Behavioral and Instructional Supports--are needed. The system is encouraged to establish and monitor disciplinary procedures in accordance with the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

Required Actions

With the assistance of their local stakeholders, the Clayton County School System must develop a Compliance Action Plan (CAP) to address the improvement of mathematics achievement, including the cited compliance items for students with disabilities. The CAP then becomes a part of the system's Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP) plan.

The GCIMP plan already includes a goal with targets to address mathematics achievement. The system must convene stakeholders, develop the CAP *and* revise the GCIMP plan and submit *both* to the DOE team leader within **45 calendar days** of receiving this report. The plan must be approved by the superintendent and include the list of stakeholders who assisted in the development and local approval of the CAP and GCIMP plan.

The CAP, which must be approved by DOE, must include a long range plan for increasing the achievement of mathematics for students with disabilities. It must also contain very specific actions and reporting activities for up to one calendar year to bring the noncompliant items into compliance.

When developing activities and tasks for the CAP, systems are asked to review the following elements, determine needs and include activities from these categories to improve achievement for students with disabilities:

- Infrastructure (culture, leadership, resources, certification, personnel)
- Policies, procedures and practices
- Professional learning
- Technical assistance/support (assistance implementing professional learning activities)
- Supervision (to assure that policies, procedures and practices are being implemented)

The system is encouraged to work collaboratively with Charlene Boykins, Compliance Team Leader, and Lynn Holland, District Liaison, in the development and on-going implementation of this plan.

The DOE has completed the compliance item sections in the chart below. The system must complete the chart with the plan for bringing the items into compliance. A sample of a completed Compliance Action Plan is at the end of this report.

Focused Monitoring Funds

Funds have been allocated for systems in Focused Monitoring in FY06. These funds are allotted by system size. Clayton County School System will have up to \$60,000 available to use toward implementing this Improvement Plan and compliance actions. If the school system chooses to access these funds, they must submit a revised budget with their Improvement Plan 45 days from receipt of this report. Budget forms are available on the DOE web page. A narrative describing the plan to use the funds must accompany the budget pages. The use of the additional funds must be clearly identified in the chart in the resources column of the Compliance Action Plan. Systems may, of course, reallocate other funds to supplement these improvement actions.

DOE Approval of Plan and Budget

The District Liaison and other DOE staff will review the CAP and GCIMP plan. The Clayton County School System may be contacted for further clarification or revisions. Once the DOE has accepted the CAP and GCIMP plan, the Clayton County School System will receive written notification of the approval. Approval should be received by the system within 30 days of submission to the DOE.

Once approval is received, the Clayton County School System must submit the interim progress documentation as scheduled in the plan. Your District Liaison, Lynn Holland, and your team leader, Charlene Boykins, will have regular contact with the special education directors to ensure improvement and compliance activities are on-going. At any time that assistance is needed or the plan needs to be amended, the system should contact the DOE.

No later than one year after the date of the Final Report, the Compliance Team Leader and the District Liaison will verify that all noncompliance items have come into compliance and that the system is fully implementing the Improvement Plan. System achievement gap data will be reviewed after spring testing in the 2006-07 school year to verify that the targets were met. Systems that fail to meet compliance criteria within one year or that fail to meet the targets in their GCIMP goals may be subject to sanctions from the DOE.

Future Focused Monitoring

Any system that was selected for Focused Monitoring in a fiscal year will be removed from the possibility of a Focused Monitoring for the next fiscal year for the same priority goal.

Steps to Completing Required Actions

1. Clayton County School System must convene stakeholders and:
 - a. Complete the attached Compliance Action Plan to specifically address the findings in this report. The plan must include a long range plan for increasing the achievement of mathematics for students with disabilities. It must also contain very specific actions and reporting activities for up to one calendar year to bring the noncompliant items into compliance.
 - b. Review the system's Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process plan to address the improvement of mathematics achievement. The plan must be revised with targets addressing mathematics achievement and submitted with the CAP.
2. Develop a revised budget for use of allocated funds as part of the CAP using budget forms (available on the DOE website). The GCIMP plan, with targets, must be approved and signed by the superintendent and stakeholders who assisted in its development.
3. The system must submit the Compliance Action Plan, revised GCIMP plan and revised budget to the DOE team leader within **45 calendar days** of receiving this report. The CAP must be submitted electronically as well as via US mail. All other documentation must be mailed.

**COMPLIANCE ACTION PLAN FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
IN THE CLAYTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Date:

Area of noncompliance #1: A free appropriate public education (FAPE) is not provided to some students with disabilities.

- Some students with disabilities do not have access to the general curriculum.
- Appropriate, individualized accommodations for instruction and assessment are not provided to some students with disabilities.

TASKS/ACTIVITIES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	ACTIVITY TIMELINES	DOCUMENTATION	DUE DATES	RESOURCES	DOC. RECEIVED

**COMPLIANCE ACTION PLAN FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
IN THE CLAYTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Date:

Area of noncompliance #2: Some students with disabilities are not educated with students who are not disabled, to the maximum extent appropriate.

- A full continuum of placement options is not always considered by IEP teams.

TASKS/ACTIVITIES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	ACTIVITY TIMELINES	DOCUMENTATION	DUE DATES	RESOURCES	DOC. RECEIVED

The district stakeholder committee, as signed below, submits the Compliance Action Plan for Clayton County School System and assures that all responsible parties will complete tasks as outlined in order to meet the determined “evidence of change.”

TEAM MEMBER SIGNATURE	POSITION	PHONE/E-MAIL

Assurance Statement:
As the duly authorized representative, I hereby certify that the listed stakeholder members collaboratively developed the CAP to address the achievement in mathematics for students with disabilities. Each activity in the CAP will be carried out in compliance with the procedural requirements of IDEA and the corresponding state and federal regulations. I further certify that the system will commit the financial and personnel resources as outlined in the CAP to ensure the implementation and ultimate success of the plan.

Superintendent’s Signature
(Original Ink Signature Required)

Date

DOE Approval:
The above plan has been reviewed and approved by the Georgia Department of Education, Division for Exceptional Students.

Marlene R. Bryar
Director, Division for Exceptional Students

Date

SAMPLE COMPLIANCE ACTION PLAN FOR MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Noncompliance #1: The evidence demonstrates that [] School System does not provide a free appropriate public education to all students with disabilities.

- Students in special education settings do not have access to the general education mathematics curriculum.
- Assistive technology is not being provided to enable students to access the general education curriculum.

TASKS/ACTIVITIES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINES	DOCUMENTATION	Due Dates	RESOURCES	Doc. Received
1. Grade level general education mathematics textbooks and materials will be provided to all special education classrooms.	Special Education Director Superintendent Curriculum Director	Yearly beginning January 2006 with all new textbook adoptions and orders.	Confirmation of textbook distribution at each school.	8/15/2006	Funding through textbook purchasing/curriculum	
2. All special education teachers will receive training in teaching the GPS. All special education math teachers will receive instruction in math content and in teaching the general education curriculum.	System trainers in GPS. GLRS staff Math department chairperson	Workshop for all math teachers in summer 2006. Ongoing GPS training.	Agenda and sign in sheets from staff training session(s).	8/15/2006	Stipends for teachers for math workshops during summer break. (App. \$4,000)	
3. Policies and procedures for identification, evaluation, and assessment of assistive technology needs will be developed and a handbook will be distributed to all teachers through a newly formed AT committee.	Special Education Director and AT committee with input from GPAT	Committee formed immediately. Handbook completed by April, 2006.	Manual of policies and procedures for Assistive Technology.	5/1/2006	Printing & binding of handbook (App. \$500.00)	
4. Professional learning will be provided to all special education teachers in the use of assistive technology in the classroom and the system policies and procedures for identification and referral for AT services.	GPAT staff to train Special Education Director and AT committee for redelivery to all special education staff	GPAT training completed by March 1, 2006. Redelivery to staff completed by May 30, 2006.	Agenda and sign in sheets from staff training.	5/1/2006 6/30/2006	Substitute pay for AT committee (App. \$500.00)	
5. Ongoing coaching and support will be provided to teachers in providing math instruction and in assessing and using assistive technology in the classroom through discussion at special education meetings and in classroom visits.	Special Education Director Building level lead teachers	Beginning immediately and ongoing throughout each school year.	Special Education Director will monitor implementation of this process. Documentation of the development of this process and its implementation will be provided to DOE.	8/15/2006	No funds required.	