

Park Ridge-Niles District 64 Comprehensive Review Summary LMT Consulting

PRESENTED BY:
LISA M. HARROD
LEAD AUDITOR

The Process

- The District engaged in an agreement to have our auditing team conduct an independent audit of the special education department.
- The District stated they will use the data and information presented to assist the department in prioritizing any areas of reform that are needed.
- The review/audit presents findings useful in helping the new director to open up communication and serve as a resource to stakeholders.

Summary of Information Gathered

- The lead auditor reviewed over 54 documents and videos before the on-site parent meeting and over the last month.
- Parent interviews were conducted on April 11, 2018.
- On-site interviews were conducted by a team of 5 auditors on April 12th and April 16th.
- An exit interview/debriefing was held in the evening of April 16th to share consistent themes, preliminary findings, and a review of the process moving forward.

Stakeholder Interviews

- 75 parents were interviewed as part of the forum night, appointments at the schools, or by phone with the lead auditor.
- 149 staff members and support staff were interviewed over a two-day period.
- 25 District administrators were interviewed at the school site or district office.
- 1 District Board of Education member was interviewed.

Moving Forward



The auditing team feels the following words represent a model district commitment to successful movement of the department in the future:

Rebuilding Positive Relationships

Open Communication

Higher Expectations

Shared Ownership =

A Renewed Trust

Summary of Strengths and Celebrations



The greatest asset the district has is its staff members and children!

Mr. Padavic has helped to open up communication and focus on the issues that have been reported over the last few months.

Educators do their best to advocate for students under challenging circumstances.

Staff members are flexible in adapting to change and internal teams are strong.

* Please see Executive Summary for a detailed list of strengths.

Challenges and Opportunities for Improvement

- Lack of trust needing to be rebuilt
- A disconnect with the outstanding work of the district special education teams and the department.
- Decisions for students placement based on percentiles and cut-off scores on assessments.
- Adversarial environment in special education meetings.
- Change in climate and culture over the last two years.
- Programming options and the continuum of services declining.
- Change of placement recommendations occurring outside of the IEP process.

Challenges and Opportunities for Improvement

- Programs should be individualized based on student need and ability level. Goals and objectives should reflect student outcomes rather than benchmark targets and scores.
- IEP's are not consistently written in a clear and comprehensive format.
- Teacher assistants are not given training in the areas of behavior management and the unique needs of the students they serve.
- Interventions and additional data-collection methods need to be attempted before the placement of students in more restrictive environments.
- 504 Accommodation Plans need to be reviewed and staff members should be given a summary of any modifications or accommodations that are to be implemented in the classroom setting.

Recommendations and Ideas for Growth

- The coordinator position can be changed to better provide the ability to know, understand, and be visible to gain the trust of staff members and create a more personalized approach when critical decisions are being made about programming and placement.
- Strong, systemic professional development opportunities should be created for certified staff.
- High quality professional development in the area of writing goals and objectives.
- Implement on-going vertical articulation.
- Provide detailed information on the MTSS, Core, and Core Plus.
- Discuss the transition process for students who no longer qualify for special education services.
- Define expectations and goals for the co-taught classrooms.
- Training for the superintendent and other relevant administration aimed at increasing knowledge of special education law, and individualization of programming for students with special needs.
- Review initiatives to make sure they are not competing with reform efforts.

Recommendations and Ideas for Growth

- Shared ownership and discussion of placement decisions by all members of the IEP team.
- Open communication by the creation of a department newsletter.
- Consider creation of a Best Buddies program (Emerson currently has an established one) and other opportunities to celebrate inclusion at district schools.
- Time set aside at each building to celebrate the diversity of students and work towards an increased understanding of students with special needs.
- Create a brochure for parents to assist in understanding special education vocabulary and an explanation of the continuum of services.
- A team should be formed to engage in conversations about programming options for students exhibiting behavioral challenges in and outside of the home school environment, including conversation about a behavior management specialist on staff.

In Closing



Thank you!!!

The auditing team would like to thank:

The building and district office administration for information useful in the audit. The building admin made our visits seamless.

The staff members for sharing concerns and areas of growth in a honest and professional manner.

The parents who we had the pleasure of meeting. Thank you for sharing your stories.

In Closing



It is our hope now that the audit has been completed that the Board of Education, parents, district administration, superintendent, and dedicated staff members will come together with a renewed sense of collaboration and a growth mindset that will move the district forward **TOGETHER!** The trust that can be rebuilt will increase opportunity for students in District 64.

We wish you the very best of everything!