

Rhode Island Department of Education
Office of Special Populations

School Support System Report and Support Plan for the
Northern Rhode Island Collaborative
April 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 Interviews 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 responsive 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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Northern Rhode Island Collaborative
School Support System Review
April, 2004

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1. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	<p>The Northern Rhode Island Collaborative (NRIC) is a multi-purpose educational collaborative that responds to the immediate and long-term issues facing its member districts. Based on space availability nonmember district can also be served. The primary sources of revenue for the Collaborative are the fees for special education services and a General Assembly Grant. In addition, administrative fees for grant management also produces some revenue. Member districts are not required to purchase any service, nor make any annual contribution. Membership of the NRIC consists of the following municipalities: Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Foster-Glocester, Glocester, Johnston, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Smithfield an Woonsocket. The NRIC is operated by a Policy Board of the eleven Superintendents of the schools that, as members of the Board of Superintendents, manage the property, affairs and activities of the Collaborative.</p>	<p>Document Review District Presentation Administrative and Faculty Interview</p>		
Performance	2	<p>The NRIC a number of grants and initiatives. These include but are not limited to:</p> <p>The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) and RIDE cooperative Agreement initiative . This initiative-- the Regional vocational assessment and Transition development Center has been developed where ORS eligible students primarily those with behavioral disabilities will be referred by school districts to further develop and eventually implement a vocational plan of action that is based on a review of current evaluations, assessments and inventories measuring vocational and aptitude level. (see also section Transition)</p>	<p>Document Review District Presentation Administrative and Faculty Interview</p>		

		ACT II (Supporting All Students). The formation of a regional support team with representation from each school district in the collaborative region. The team provides support to district in a systemic region-wide manner. Transition Organization and Planning System (TOPS) Grant (see also Transition section)			
Performance	3	Staff expressed feeling supported and having confidence in the new Special Education Director.	Administrative and Faculty Interview		

2. SCHOOL CLIMATE					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	Throughout the NRIC programs staff were warm and friendly. Staff clearly were student-centered and focused on positive learner outcomes.	Observation Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	2	The central office if the NRIC has a large resource library available to all staff and member districts. These include an array of materials, video's, curriculum, instructional supports, transition related materials, technology, etc. The continued focus of the resource library is on creating communities of learning within the schools and classes.	Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	3	The Specialized Alternative Program (SAP) and the Regional Alternative Program (RAP) of NRIC published a program specific parent handbook describing the overall program, procedures and expectations for students and families.	Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	4	NRIC provides a structured staff mentoring program for all new staff, whenever possible staff are matched with mentors that have the same certification backgrounds as	Administrative and Faculty Interview		

		themselves. Staff involved in the mentoring program reported it as being a very positive experience.			
Performance	5	The NRIC maintains a number of cooperative relationship with local CEDAR Programs, Bradley Hospital, Community Mental Health Centers etc., in maintaining coordinated planning for students social emotional learning and health related services.	Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	6	The role of the NRIC School Social Workers is to facilitate all family and community linkages in maintaining coordination student services. Social workers will also facilitate groups (student and parent) determined by population needs. SAP and RAP social workers attend outside related service meetings and appointments with child and family in addition to home visiting.	Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	7	<p>The NRIC SAP Pre-School at the Monastery host the Cumberland Kinder-Pal Program. The Kinder-Pal Program provides pre-school peer role models an extended school experience at the SAP Pre-School program at the Monastery. This program fosters communication, friendship, cooperative play, self-esteem and independence through play and "hands-on" experiences. Interested Cumberland pre-school peers are observed and families are interview to assure appropriate participation and overall program success. A bus is provided and the program participation is free.</p> <p>The Child Care Connection preschool located in Central Falls is home to an NRIC integrated preschool class. This program also fosters communication, friendships, cooperative plan, selfesteem and independence with typical peers.</p>	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview Observation		

3. TEACHING PRACTICES

Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	<p>The Collaborative has an Executive Director, Assistant Director and Business Manager. Each program has a Program Coordinator who oversees the day-to-day operations of the individual program. The program Coordinators meet on a weekly basis with their staff or in some instances on an as needed basis. The Assistant Director serves as the Special Education Director and has meetings with the Program Coordinator on a weekly basis to review programmatic and regulatory concerns. The Assistant Director in conjunction with the Program Coordinator for related services also meets on a monthly basis with the occupational and physical therapists as well as separate monthly meeting for the school nurse teachers.</p> <p>The Adaptive Physical Education Teachers and Speech Pathologist do not have regular meetings with the Assistant Director or Program Coordinator for related services.</p>	<p>Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview</p>		
Performance	2	<p>At the NRIC there are a total of 41 permanent special education teachers. Eight of the 41 (19.5%) are on emergency certification. Several of those individuals are participating in the Providence College-RIDE cohort for emergency certified personnel. Of the eight on emergency certifications five are close to the completion of their programs.</p>	<p>Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview</p>		

Performance	3	The overall approach to instructional practices is “eclectic” throughout the NRIC. Each program and grade level facilitated specific instructional practices and array of instructional methods and models to support the personalization of instruction and learning opportunities for each student. Standards based instruction as well as the early learning standards instructional practices were emerging throughout the programs. (Examples of unique instructional models were PECS, TEACCH, Positive Behavioral Instructional Strategies, Lexia, SAS, Stevenson and others). Although standards based instruction varied from program to program and from class to class staff reported making a concerted effort to link teaching and learning to the standards. Curriculum needs are processed through the respective Program Coordinators and Special Education Director. Each program at each site has a budget and teachers can chose items from catalogues or get reimbursed for consumables that they procure locally. Related service personnel go through the classroom budgets for their supplies and materials.	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview Observation		
Performance	4	Faculty throughout the NRIC utilized student specific data, classroom observations, behavioral management data, student work, parental communication and state assessment findings to inform instructional practices for both the individual student, educational strategies and enhancing the classroom setting.	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	5	Most often related services throughout the NRIC are facilitated in the classroom setting providing modeling for faculty and therapeutic experiences for all students participating. Pull out services and supports are provided for specific IEP directed activities and evaluations. (More SAP than RAP)	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview		

Performance	6	Meeting and opportunities for common planning time varied across the NRIC programs and services. However faculty noted the need to create common planning time for instructional collaboration and facilitation of personalized instruction for all students.	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview	Faculty and administration are currently in the process of reviewing the structure and scope of formal/structured common planning time. Timeline: Ongoing. Progress check December 2004	
Performance	7	Staff at the NRIC video student activity to share as a learning tool with parents and faculty to address specific areas of concern, learning strategies or behavioral interventions.	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	8	At St. James School the RAP is facilitating the Learning for Life character education curriculum of the Boy Scouts of America. The curriculum addresses thematic lesson plans addressing respect, responsibility, honesty and trust, caring fairness, perseverance, self-discipline, courage, citizenship and life skills.	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	9	Faculty at St. James and St. Theresa's have participate in SAS training. This opportunity has provided faculty with curriculum resources and ideas. Faculty have implemented concepts related to differentiated instruction, multiple intelligences, Dink and Tic-Tac-Toe (putting together individual information building to a comprehensive statement or idea) and the development of classroom learning centers. The RAP program at St. Lawrence operates a school cafeteria. Students rotate through various cooking and management position and cook food to order for students and staff on a weekly basis. Everyone reported this as positive experience and socialization opportunity. St. Lawrence also participated in a real Life transition fair. Students interact with a variety of community agencies in a	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview		

		simulated real-life activity. Both staff and students reported that this was very successful event (see also Transition section).			
Performance	10	<p>NRIC provides a variety of services that member districts can chose to access. Specifically NRIC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conducts specific education classes for students with developmental disabilities, language disorders, autism, multi-handicapped and behavior disorders in public school and day school placements -Provides occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, social work services, vocational evaluation and job development services, and nursing services, and adapted physical education services. -Conducts technology initiatives -Coordinates and implements a cooperative bidding program for member districts including xerographic/duplicating paper. -Coordinates and implements various grants/project initiatives. 	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	11	At the NRIC there are a total of 41 permanent special education teachers. Eight of the 41 (19.5%) are on emergency certification. Several of those individuals are participating in the Providence College-RIDE cohort for emergency certified personnel. Of the eight on emergency certifications five are close to the completion of their programs.	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview		

4. FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE) IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	Current student enrollment at NRIC is approx. 256. There are 24 Specialized Alternative Classrooms and 13 Regional Alternative Classrooms as well as one per school classroom for children with mild to moderate special needs. Fourteen of the special education classrooms are located in public schools settings. The remainder are located in leased spaces from a variety of parochial and private schools. Some of the parochial schools have parochial general education classes occurring concurrently and some school facilities are empty except for the NRIC classes.	Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	2	<p>The NRIC facilitates a Specialized Alternative Program (SAP), which provides educational services and supports for students with multiple disabilities, medical involvement and language disorders from three to twenty-one years of age (PreK-12).</p> <p>The special education continuum at NRIC provides a pre-school/elementary level program for students experiencing mild moderate disabilities, developmentally delays, language delays, behaviorally challenges and multiple disabilities including medically involved students with an individualized educational setting to enhance overall learning experiences.</p> <p>The continuum of the SAP at the Monastery consists of five classrooms for students. Three classes are facilitated for students with autistic spectrum disorder, one classroom for students with multiple and medical disabilities and one classroom for students with mild moderate behavioral disabilities. Students in the program range from three to six years of age with classrooms not exceeding an age range of three years.</p>	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview Observation		

	<p>There are five certified special education teachers, ten instructional assistants (two in each classroom) along with a school social worker, nurse, and SLP, OT and PT service therapies. Additional staff are available at critical times during the day scheduled into daily planning.</p> <p>Child care connection consists of several preschool classes with one of the classes being a NRIC class. It is staffed by a certified special education teachers with two teacher assistants.</p> <p>St. James School facilitates two SAP classroom programs including a pre-school and upper elementary program.</p> <p>The SAP at LaPerche is an elementary classroom for seven students with sever profound disabilities. There is a special education teacher, and four instructional assistants providing an integrated individualized program. Students at LaPerche are a part of the whole school community participating in a third grade general education class, attending school assembles, lunch and music along with their typically developing peers</p> <p>St. Lawrence also houses a SAP class for students that have significant medical needs. A full-time nurse is housed in that facility and works with the class in addition to three teacher assistants and a teacher.</p> <p>North Providence high school also houses a SAP class. Students are able to interact with typical peers during lunch and assembles. In addition there is an Apartment class that older students (19-21) participate in learning functional living skills and have job-related experiences. A student may serve part of his/her day at the high school and part at the apartments depending on the need of these students.</p>			
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Performance	3	<p>The NRIC facilitates a Regional Alternative Program (RAP) for students with serious emotional disabilities and behavioral health related challenges for school age children K through 12th grade. The RAP provides a highly structured, therapeutic educational environment to assist students in the personal development of positive behavioral responses to the world around them while maintaining academic progress. For students at the secondary level along with behavioral and academic learning, community service learning and career hands on experiences are an integral part of the program.</p> <p>St. James School is a day school program for students needing a more individualized instructional environment. The continuum at the St. James School consists of five classrooms for elementary/middle level students with behavioral difficulties and two classrooms for elementary/middle level students with severe profound disabilities. Additionally at St James is a pre-school class and an upper elementary class for students with severe profound disabilities.</p> <p>There are also NRIC classes housed at St. Theresa's elementary school in Pawtucket and North Smithfield Elementary School.</p> <p>The Ferri Middle School RAP is a transitional class for students who may be transitioning from the elementary RAP, potentially to a high school RAP and or to their home school community. The program is facilitated by a special education teacher, supported by an instructional assistant and a social worker who is available two days a week. There are currently six students participating in the program with the capacity for up to ten. Students participating at the RAP at Ferri Middle School have an opportunity to engage in the public school general education program. Students are mainstreamed in</p>	Document Administrative and Faculty Interview Observation		
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		<p>science, band and chorus. Additionally students participate in the school assemblies, and city recreational after school programs</p> <p>St. Lawrence houses the secondary RAP students. Students receive all their core content classes from their RAP teachers. Students can tailor their day to have job-related experiences for part of the day. NRIC are the only classes in the building.</p> <p>North Providence High School also houses a RAP class. Students are mainstreamed into general education classes as appropriate and all students participate in general education co-curricular classes.</p>			
Performance	4	It's unclear for NRIC faculty how interpreters are identified to participate in related meetings for families and how responsibility is facilitated.	<p>Administrative and Faculty Interview</p> <p>Surveys</p> <p>Record Review</p>	<p>The Special Education Director in conjunction with the Coordinators will provide information to the faculty and staff on the policies/protocols for interpreter procurement.</p> <p>Timeline: September 2004</p>	

5. EVALUATION/ INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	Re-evaluation procedures, protocols and time lines are unclear for faculty of both the RAP and the SAP.	Administrative and Faculty Interview Record Review	The Special Education Director has reviewed this finding with the Operating Committee. A subcommittee will be formed (Summer 2004) to develop protocols for re-evaluating and re-determination of eligibility. Timeline: Ongoing. Progress check November 2005	
Performance	2	The NRIC facilitates IEPs for students after they have participated in the overall program for six to eight week to assure effective individualized education planning.	Administrative and Faculty Interview Record Review		
Performance	3	Functional behavioral assessments are facilitated as an eligibility assessment, as well as a behavioral intervention, to develop behavioral support plans that are individualized for overall student success at NRIC.	Administrative and Faculty Interview Record Review		
Performance/ Compliance	4	ESY eligibility determination is not always reviewed through an IEP meeting and additionally approved without parent input. Coordinators send LEAs ESY recommendations for their review and approval for program participation.	Administrative and Faculty Interview	The Special Education Director worked in conjunction with the Coordinators and IEP chair to formalize the process for ESY determination. Timeline: Immediately and ongoing.	

6. TRANSITION					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	The NRIC engages in a comprehensive approach to entrance policies and practices, transition planning from program to program and back to the student's home school community along with an aftercare/follow-up component. Faculty and families participate in classroom observations, site interviews and in-depth reviews of students and program related information.	Document Administrative, Faculty, Student and Parent Interview		
Performance	2	Career day is planned annually at the St. James RAP in conjunction with the Learning for Life program supported by the Narragansett Counsel of Boy Scouts of America. Students rotate from class to class to listen to different career related presentations and engage in discussions with the presenters to address their particular interest. St. Lawrence also participated in a real Life transition fair. Students interact with a variety of community agencies in a simulated real-life activity. Both staff and students reported that this was very successful .	Document Administrative And Faculty Interview Observation		
Performance	3	NRIC has two vocational evaluators and two job facilitators/coaches. These individuals work with the classroom teachers to conduct the vocational assessment process. They also provide a myriad of career and work – related exploration opportunities for students. Assessments measure academic and vocational competencies, which yield the students vocational profiles. Community services, job coaching and work study opportunities are then deigned to meet the students vocational interests and needs. There is Vocational Resource Center at the NRIC main office, which district members and NRIC staff can utilize. A van is available for RAP secondary students for community-based transition activities.	Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview		

Performance	4	Secondary students in the RAP program have a variety of vocational opportunities. These include several on-site initiatives, community-based training program, arrangements with area vocational-technical high school, and work study programs. Student programs are individualized and take into consideration the student's cognitive, emotional and behavioral status. The goal is to prepare students for their eventual transition to post-secondary education and/or training to the world of work.	Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	5	Secondary students in the SAP program also have a range of vocational and work-related opportunities available for them. These are tailored to meet the individual students' strengths and needs. Students participate in work experiences at local businesses such as Pizza Hut and Kmart. Staff reported that these have provided positive work-related and socialization opportunities for students. Students located in the public high school setting also participate in jobs around their school-site such as assisting in the cafeterias. Staff at each SAP school location have the NRIC van available on a prioritized basis determined by the Coordinators. The students at the high school and middle school have the van once a week and students at the apartment have the van twice a week. All staff reported wanting more use of the van but realize due to logistical constraints this is not currently feasible.	Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview	The Special Education Director and Coordinator will engage in discussion to strategies for increasing the availability of the van to provide for student transportation. Timeline: Ongoing.	
Performance	6	NRIC currently facilitates a Transition Organization and Planning System (TOPS) Grant. NRIC, three other collaboratives and Providence were identified as regional centers for the coordination of a system for developing and disseminating transition information to parents, students, school personnel, and other appropriate	Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview		

		agencies. The NRIC Transition Advisory Council (TAC) is comprised of teachers, social workers, rehabilitation counselors and representatives from various adult service agencies is the vehicle through which this information is distributed. The NRIC is also the site of the Transition Resource Center, which houses texts and magazines, and journals as well as other training materials related to transition.			
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7. PARENT INVOLVEMENT					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	The NRIC Social Workers facilitate parent groups and professional development opportunities related to parental concerns and needs.	Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	2	NRIC provides Parents consistent information and guidance regarding their Childs progress program activities and services through daily notes, regular phone calls and home visits.	Administrative, Faculty and Parent Interviews		
Performance	3	Some schools publish newsletters.	Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance	4	Consistent communication with parents. Coordinators, related service providers, case managers, and teachers do home visits on an as needed basis.	Document Review Administrative and Faculty Interview		

8. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	NRIC provides a number of professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in. The NRIC provides tuition support (\$450.00) for teachers and staff engaged in higher education, a professional day in August and each coordinator facilitates discussions regarding their faculty needs and is afforded financial support to facilitate interested in-service.	Administrative and Faculty Interview		
		Lists: Early Learning Standards, Technology in the classroom, character education/social emotional learning, positive behavioral supports, differentiated instruction, standards based instructional practices,			
	2	The Professional Development Training and Resource Center may provide, coordinate and facilitate a variety of professional development and training opportunities. Some recent professional development opportunities have included: Assessment Issues Emergency teacher Full certification course Work Frameworks Dissemination Grant Wiring Consultation/Implementation Instructional Issues Reading Literacy Software integration Teacher Assistant network sessions Technology professional development			

	3	A professional resource library is also housed at NRIC's main office. It contains materials ranging from books and journals to videotapes and computer software on topics including, but not limited to, curriculum assessment transition, mathematics, science, technology and frameworks. Teachers can utilize the available resources after school during planning sessions or professional days for assistance with their units and lesson plans.			
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9. FACILITIES					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Performance	1	Evacuation plans were posted throughout the buildings and faculty were familiar with procedures for students needing assistance in responding to emergencies.	Administrative and Faculty Interview		
Performance/ Compliance	2	Physical education classes are, at times held in the hallways of the North Providence High Schools and at St. Patrick's. This allows for frequent interruptions in service delivery and in general a lack of appropriate space to meet students adaptive physical educational needs.	Administrative and Faculty Interview	The Special Education Director will have discussion with the physical education teachers and district administrators as appropriate to review the space issues. Timeline: Immediately and ongoing	