Special School District Program Evaluation for Students with Multiple Disabilities

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Special School District is committed to program evaluation as a foundation for the continuous improvement process. The program evaluation framework approved by the Board of Education (2003) guides Special School District staff in conducting program evaluation activities to measure, analyze and effectively manage special education services and operations. The Multiple Disabilities Program Evaluation was a formative process occurring from January 2005 through June 2005. This summative report details the process, results and recommendations that will guide future improvement activities for this population.

Stakeholders were engaged as ongoing steering committee members, work group members, and as public forum participants. The committee membership included teachers, facilitators, related service staff, administrators, and parents (Appendix 1-1). The questions posed by the committee and approved by the Board of Education were designed to provide a review of services across the county and in all service delivery models.

The focus of the program evaluation was to answer five questions approved by the Board of Education:

1. *How is SSD programming preparing students with Multiple Disabilities for post-secondary placements?*
2. *How effectively do we work with agencies for smooth transitions of students with Multiple Disabilities to post-secondary placements?*
3. *What are the levels of supports currently in place for students with Multiple Disabilities in St. Louis County?*
4. *What is the historical perspective of the Multiple Disabilities diagnosis?*
5. *Does the diagnosis of Multiple Disabilities impact programming?*

Literature Review

The committee reviewed literature relating to students with multiple disabilities. Several program indicators were prevalent in the preparation of students for post-secondary transition. The following is a list of those best practices:

Transdisciplinary teams, communication needs, transition – post-secondary training, assistive technology, social skills, community-based instruction, vocational training, survival skills, functional skills (Syracuse, Iowa), inclusive instruction, least restrictive environments, self-advocacy skills, training and expertise of the special education teacher, and generalization of skills.

In interviewing teachers, parents and related staff at the large group meetings and individually all of these indicators can be found in the current programming that SSD is continually providing, however there are new demands. NCLB, AYP and the literacy push were not discussed as implications of the programming for students with Multiple Disabilities in literature. The literature indicates that most research is linked to functional reading and math as academic standards and little (less that 10%) has focused on cognitive/academic skills (Journal of Special Education, 2003, p.3). However we are faced with these realities and in further research it would be interesting to see how these new laws are impacting the programming to prepare students. DESE furnishes the Missouri Alternative Frameworks (Appendix 9-1), which does correlate with essential skills training and meeting AYP, and NCLB criteria that help guide teachers with programming.

The committee chose to look at the following areas to gather more information: career and education, social skills, transportation, living skills, and self-advocacy/personal management skills all as they relate to post-secondary placements. IDEA has mandated that all children have access to the general education curriculum, however the literature states personal care and essential skills be taught in inclusionary settings with the hopes that these skills will generalize to their real life situations.

Methodology

Data were gathered by review of available demographic information, quality indicators derived from the literature review, interviews with diagnosticians, transition facilitators and agency representatives, parent, teacher and agency surveys of quality indicators. Analysis of open-ended comments of parents who had students age 14yrs and above, comparison of parent survey results with staff survey results and agency results, public forum, file review, and cost analysis.

Results

The committee members met to review, assimilate, and analyze the program evaluation data. A review of the cost analyses, surveys and work from the large work committee were used as a basis for the outcomes of this evaluation.

Cost Analysis

Although cost analysis was not a direct question, the committee did feel it was important to note the cost in this report. The costs of the program were provided to the committee by the director of finance. The most costly service was for students with multiple disabilities educated in a purchase of service agency is $41,503, followed by students with multiple disabilities educated in a public separate school is $36,589, then by students in self-contained classrooms in partner districts is $27,571, then by students who spend up to 60% of their day in a special education setting is $11,560. The average paraprofessional costs $25,569. According to a random survey returned by 58 teachers, 27 of their students age 14 years and above have paraeducator support for some part of their day. All students with multiple disabilities do not have a paraprofessional with them all day. Some students are in a classroom with a paraprofessional in the classroom and some have a paraprofessional assigned to them for part of a day. Since 50% of the students are receiving their education in a general education building and the other 50% are in a public separate school. It was found that the difference between educating a student in a separate school is similar in cost to educating a student in a general education school with a paraprofessional assigned to him/her for all or part of the school day.

Strengths

Several areas of strength were identified. Teachers consistently felt that the programs offered to students 14 yrs and above were preparing the students appropriately in the areas of social skills while engaged in school or community activities, the ability to express their opinions and needs and utilizing functional skill/essential skills to their full potential.

The parents of students that were 14 years and above felt that the SSD program was preparing the students to participate in their IEP, have appropriate social skills while in the school or community and able to express opinions and needs to their full potential.

The agencies surveyed saw the strengths of the program that is preparing the students to display appropriate social skills while engaged in school or community

activities, able to express their opinions and needs appropriately, and able to manage their hygiene appropriately.

<u>Weaknesses</u>

The evaluation identified several main areas of challenge. One was the general understanding on the definition of the diagnosis of multiple disabilities. There is some confusion regarding "Severely Handicapped", "Multiple Disabilities", and "Deaf/Blind" as diagnosis that could describe students that meet under the Multiple Disabilities criteria.

From the surveys returned there was a significant discrepancy between the scores of the teachers and the parents on the programming and how the district was preparing the students for post-secondary activities. There was also a discrepancy between the agency and the teacher except in the areas of communication and self-advocacy.

The largest discrepancy was the perception of how the program is preparing the students the skills needed for post-secondary living arrangements. On one hand the teachers' perceive this as a strength, 4.1 where the parents felt this was a challenge 2.3.

Both the teachers and parents saw as a weakness of the program the ability of students to decide what career options they want, community based instruction for vocational training and the ability to explore and visit post-secondary options and agencies. Also, 78% of the teachers surveyed stated that they had provided transition planning assessments with their students while only 36% of the parents said that the Transition planning assessment was used.

Limitations

The data collected for this evaluation provided the committee with a significant amount of information that had not previously been reviewed as a whole to lead towards systemic improvement. However, in the process of data analysis, the committee noted several limitations that may have affected the reported results. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results and designing future program evaluation activities.

1. Only 5 out of 32 agencies returned the survey.

2. Student input was not included.

3. Information from students less than 14 years of age was not collected.

4. Nobody attended the Public Forum.

Recommendations

The recommendations address identified needs in the areas of parent and agency communication, teacher training. Action plans will be developed by the program evaluation steering committee to address the recommendations and align with the district's rolling plan objectives.

1. Work with the Special School District Transition Department to include students with Multiple Disabilities and their expansive needs in the department's action plans.

2. Transition Assessment results will be discussed with the parent at the child's IEP meeting and included in the present level.

3. Explain and discuss with parents their child's programming including community-based instruction.

4. Train teachers to invite appropriate agencies to IEP meetings and provide the agencies with accurate information about the program of the child.

5. Discuss with parents what training has been provided to their child on living arrangements.

6. Explore why students have not had opportunities to explore post-secondary placements or agencies.

7. Include students with Multiple Disabilities in community-based vocational training.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Purpose

Special School District is committed to program evaluation as a foundation for the continuous improvement process. The program evaluation framework approved by the Board of Education (2003) guides Special School District staff in conducting program evaluation activities to measure, analyze and effectively manage special education services and operations. The Multiple Disabilities Program Evaluation was a formative process occurring from January 2005 through June 2005. This summative report details the process, results and recommendations that will guide future improvement activities for this population.

Stakeholders were engaged as ongoing steering committee members, work group members, and as public forum participants. The committee membership included teachers, facilitators, related service staff, administrators, and parents (Appendix 1-1). The questions posed by the committee and approved by the Board of Education were designed to provide a review of services across the county and in all service delivery models.

Focus for the Program Evaluation

The focus of the program evaluation was to answer five questions approved by the Board of Education:

1. *How is SSD programming preparing students with Multiple Disabilities for post-secondary placements?*
2. *How effectively do we work with agencies for smooth transitions of students with Multiple Disabilities to post-secondary placements?*
3. *What are the levels of supports currently in place for students with Multiple Disabilities in St. Louis County?*
4. *What is the historical perspective of the Multiple Disabilities diagnosis?*
5. *Does the diagnosis of Multiple Disabilities impact programming?*

Design of the Report

The report documents the review of current literature and the methodology used to evaluate the program. The results and discussion of data is based upon quality indicators that have been identified through literature review of best practices for students with Multiple Disabilities. The limitations of the program evaluation are addressed as well as recommendations of the evaluation team.

CHAPTER II

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Criteria

"Multiple Disabilities" means concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness, mental retardation-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which adversely affects the child's educational performance. The term does not include deaf/blindness. See Appendix 6-1 for DESE Criteria.

Curriculum

Curriculum for school-age students with the educational diagnosis of multiple disabilities follows the general education curriculum of the school district where the student attends school. While all students participate in specific curriculums, additional instructional strategies, based on best practices associated with their educational disability, are employed to assist students access the curriculum and demonstrate achievement. Based on the student's individualized education plan and best practices documented for the area of multiple disabilities, the following supports should be considered:

1. Adaptations-positioning, scheduling, curricular, classroom
2. Assistive technology-communication, environmental control, mobility
3. Care plans-health, transportation

Service and Placement Options

The individual needs of the student determine the direction for programming, services and placement. Educators and parents work together to identify the services and placement needed to meet the student's educational needs. The team follows three basic guidelines: (a) support the student in the least restrictive setting; (b) consider all service delivery options before finalizing placement decisions and (c) consider carefully the student and family variables along with evaluation information in making programming decisions.

Given these guidelines, educators and parents consider the following placement options:

1. <u>Outside Regular Class less that 21 percent of day:</u> Children with disabilities who receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for less than 21 percent of the school day.
2. <u>Outside Regular Class at least 21 percent/No more than 60 percent:</u> Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services outside the regular classroom for at least 21 percent but no more than 60 percent of the school day.
3. <u>Outside Regular Class more than 60 percent of the day:</u> Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services outside the regular classroom for more than 60 percent of the school day. This category does not include children who received education programs in public or private separate day or residential facilities.
4. <u>Public Separate (Day) Facility:</u> Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services for greater than 50 percent of the school day in public separate facilities.
5. <u>Private Separate (Day) Facility:</u> Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services, at public expense, for greater than 50 percent of the school day in private separate facilities.
6. <u>Public Residential Facility:</u> Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services for greater than 50 percent of the school dy in public residential facilities.
7. <u>Private Residential Facility:</u> Children with disabilities who receive al of their special education and related services, at public expense, for greater than 50 percent of the school day in private residential facilities.
8. <u>Homebound/Hospital:</u> Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services in hospital programs or homebound programs.

Engagement Activities

Families are important partners in the educational process for students with multiple disabilities. Consistent with this belief, education staff maintains frequent home-school communication and provide numerous parent education/information sessions. Teachers and related services providers work intensively with parents and medical providers. In addition, parents are linked with the Parent Advisory Councils within their districts, and receive information and resources through the Family & Community Resource Center.

Partner District Collaboration Efforts

Special Education staff and administrators participate in numerous collaborative activities with partner districts. Included are staff development activities, parent workshops, care teams and parent conferences. Finally, staff shares equipment and materials on a daily basis.

Enrollment Data

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education publishes a *Special Education District Profile* annually for each district in the fall of the school year using the December 1 census data from the previous year. The profile reports contain twelve tables compiling core data entered for the school year reporting cycle. The tables are based on five general reporting areas:
1. School Age Child Count Data
2. Early Childhood Child Count Data
3. Missouri Assessment Program Data
4. Discipline Incidents Data

The *Special Education District Profile* is one of the data sources used to evaluate performance goals and indicators, compare local data to Missouri data, and provide information for program evaluation through special education monitoring of performance data. The census data for Multiple Disabilities can be found in Appendix 2-1 includes information taken from the partner district's *Special Education District Profiles.*

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

The committee reviewed literature relating to students with multiple disabilities. Several program indicators were prevalent in the preparation of students for post-secondary transition. The following is a list of those best practices: transdisciplinary teams, communication needs, transition – post-secondary training, assistive technology, social skills, community-based instruction, vocational training, survival skills, functional skills (Syracuse, Iowa curriculum), inclusive instruction, least restrictive environments, self-advocacy skills, and generalization of skills.

In interviewing teachers, parents and related staff at the large group meetings and individually all of these indicators can be found in the current programming that SSD is continually providing, however there are new demands. NCLB, AYP and the literacy push were not discussed as implications of the programming for students with Multiple Disabilities in literature. The literature indicates that most research is linked to functional reading and math as academic standards and little (less that 10%) has focused on cognitive/academic skills (Journal of Special Education, 2003, p.3). However we are faced with these realities and in future research it would be interesting to see how these new laws are impacting the programming to prepare students.

DESE furnishes the Missouri Alternative Frameworks (Appendix 9-1), which does correlate with essential skills training and meeting AYP, and NCLB criteria that help guide teachers with programming. IDEA has mandated that all children have access to the general education curriculum, in addition, the literature also states personal care and essential skills be taught to students with multiple disabilities in inclusionary settings with the hopes that these skills will generalize to their real life situations.

The committee chose to look at the best practices, (named above) to gather more information as they relate to post-secondary placements. The committtee combined the areas to address the post-secondary needs of students. The areas chosen are: Career Exploration, Post-Secondary education exploration, Social Skills, Skills in accessing transportation/living arrangements/medical issues, Self-Advocacy skills/ Personal Management Skills, Staff Knowledge, and Family Participation.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this chapter includes the procedures involving the program evaluation process, population being reviewed, and methods of data collection and analysis used in the program evaluation for students with multiple disabilities.

Process

The program evaluation process involved various stakeholders including parents and community members. A steering committee was established to work collaboratively on the program evaluation tasks. Committee members included a director, administrator, teachers, student teacher and parent. A large work committee was also formed to give input and direction to the steering committee. The large work committee included the steering committee, additional teachers, general education administrators, agency representatives, additional parents, curriculum facilitators and transition facilitators.

The steering committee met at least every other week to review literature, data collection and interpreting phase.

Population

The population of this review was all students in Special School District who have an educational diagnosis of multiple disabilities. However the surveys sent out were to teachers and parents of students which were 14 years and above.

Methods for Data Collection and Analysis

There were eight methods used to collect data. The data collection methods used in addressing the focus questions approved by the Board of Education are noted in Table 1.

Table 1: Evaluation Focus Questions and Data Collection Methods

Multiple Disabilities Program Evaluation Focus Questions	Data Collection Methods							
	Literature Review	Teacher Survey	Parent / Guardian Survey	Agency Survey	Core Data Reports	Public Forum	Interviews/ questionnaire	File review
1. How is SSD programming preparing students with multiple disabilities for post-secondary placements?		X	X	X		n/a	X	
2. How effectively do we work with agencies for smooth transitions of students with multiple disabilities to post-secondary placements?		x	x	x		n/a	x	
3. What are the levels of supports currently in place for students with multiple disabilities in St. Louis County?		X	X		X	n/a	X	x
4. What is the historical perspective of the multiple disabilities diagnosis?	x						x	X
5. Does the diagnosis of multiple disabilities impact programming?	X	X	X	X	X	n/a	X	x

Table 2: Data sources and Data Collection Methods

Data Sources	Data Collection Methods							
	Literature Review	Teacher Survey	Parent / Guardian Survey	Agency Survey	Core Data Reports	Public Forum	Interviews/ questionnaire	File review
SSD Teachers (students ages 14 -21)		X			X	n/s		X
Parent/Guardians (children ages 14 -21)			X			n/s		
SSD Teachers (all grades)						n/s		
Parents/Guardians (all ages)						n/s		
St. Louis Agencies				X		n/s	X	
Psychological Examiner						n/s	X	
Transition Facilitator		X	X	X	X	n/s	X	
MD Program Evaluation Steering Committee						X	X	
MD Program Evaluation Large Work Committee						n/s	X	
Community						n/s		

*n/s: No show

Literature Review/Quality Indicators of Best Practices

       The committee reviewed books, articles, Missouri Alternate Frameworks, SSD Transition Assessments, and web-sites regarding students with multiple disabilities. They found the words multiple disabilities/multiple handicaps and severely handicapped synonymous throughout the literature. There were some common program indicators to prepare students for post-secondary transition. The following is a list of those best practices:

       Transdisciplinary teams, communication needs, transition – post-secondary training, assistive technology, social skills, community-based instruction, vocational training, survival skills, functional skills (Syracuse, Iowa), inclusive instruction, least restrictive environments, self-advocacy skills, training and expertise of the special education teacher, and generalization of skills.

       These indicators were used in the development of the teacher, parent and agency surveys, interviews and large group questionnaire.

Teacher Survey

The teacher survey was sent to all teachers who had at least one student with multiple disabilities on their caseload age 14 years or above. They were to fill out a survey on each student on their caseload not to exceed three. The survey was sent to 75 teachers, with a possibility of 116 surveys 66 were returned.

The respondents were asked to rate their perception of implementation of the quality indicators and how they felt SSD was doing preparing the students for post-secondary placement using a five-point Likert scale with a rating of 1 denoting strongly disagree and a rating of 5 denoting strongly agree.

Parent/Guardian Survey

A parent/guardian survey was mailed to households to parents/guardians of students age 14 and above with an educational diagnosis of multiple disabilities. This sample included 128 parents/guardians who were on the district's information database as of April 15, 2005. There were 27 surveys returned for a 21% return rate.

The respondents were asked to rate their perception of implementation of the quality indicators and how they felt SSD was doing preparing the students for pos-secondary placement using a five-point Likert scale with a rating of 1 denoting strongly disagree and a rating of 5 denoting strongly agree.

Agency Survey

An agency survey was sent to 32 St. Louis agencies that were identified from the Transition Resource list from the Parent Resource Center at Special School District. Of the 32 surveys only 5 were returned.

The respondents were asked to rate their perception of implementation of the quality indicators and how they felt SSD was doing preparing the students for their post-secondary placement using a five-point Likert scale with a rating of 1 denoting strongly disagree and a rating of 5 denoting strongly agree.

Core Data Reports

Several reports were run regarding the students who had the educational diagnosis of multiple disabilities. The reports included: demographics of the students, age, race, level of service, related services, home school and attending school.

Public Forum

A public forum was held on May 3, 2005 to gather input from parents/guardians, staff, partner district personnel, and community members on quality indicator area.

Districts were mailed a flyer via the Liaison and asked to send to schools to advertise in their buildings. Flyers were posted around Special School District Central Office and posted on the SSD website.

Unfortunately the only people who attended were the steering committee. The committee discussed other ways to retrieve information from parents and community. One idea is to have forums at school districts with personal invitations sent directly to the parents' homes.

Interviews and Large Group questionnaire

Two interviews were conducted to gain insight on the historical perspectives of the diagnosis multiple disabilities and the transition training of teachers. One psychological examiner was interviewed as was an agency representative from United Cerebral Palsy.

At our first large work group meeting on March 9th an informal questionnaire was completed by the attendees and discussion evolved from the questions. There were two agencies represented at the meeting which gave first hand insight and suggestions for the programming of students.

File Review

Through a file review of 42 student files, which were identified to provide a representational sampling of placement of students 14 years and above in partner districts, SSD schools and Missouri School for the Blind. The steering committee looked for two demographics of the child to see if the diagnosis impacted programming/placement of the child. The first question was, "When did the student initially qualify for the diagnosis of multiple disabilities, and did they have any previous diagnosis?" and the second, "What is the placement of the student and where there any previous placements?"

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Nine sets of findings are presented in this chapter. These analyses have been included to answer the following questions approved by the Board of Education:

1. *How is SSD programming preparing students with multiple disabilities for post-secondary placements?*
2. *How effectively do we work with agencies for smooth transitions of students with multiple disabilities to post-secondary placements?*
3. *What are the levels of supports currently in place for students with multiple disabilities in St. Louis County?*
4. *What is the historical perspective of the multiple disabilities diagnosis?*
5. *Does the diagnosis of multiple disabilities impact programming?*

The sets of findings are listed below, along with the number corresponding to the evaluation focus question related to the finding.

1. An analysis of the available demographic data. (BOE question 1 and 3)
2. Quality indicators derived from the literature review. (BOE question 2)
3. The results of parent surveys of quality indicators. (BOE questions 1, 2, 3, 5)
4. The results of staff surveys of quality indicators. (BOE questions 1,2,3,5)
5. The results of agency surveys of quality indicators. (BOE questions 1,2,3,5)
6. A comparison of parent survey results and teacher survey results. (BOE questions 1,2,3,5)
7. A comparison of teacher, parent and agency survey results. (BOE questions 1,2,3,5)
8. The results of file review. (BOE questions 3,5)
9. Large group committee work. (BOE questions 1,2,3,4,5)
10. The results of interviews. (BOE questions 1,2,4,5)

Demographic Data

Figure 1 depicts the number of students with multiple disabilities compared to the total students with disabilities in the St. Louis. County data and incident rates since 1999-2000 school year and are based on December 1st student counts. County and State data are based on State Profile Report November 2004. Although there was an increase in incidence rates between 2000 and 2001, the incident rate has stabilized since. (See Appendix 2-1, 2-2, 2-3, 2-4)

Figure 1: State Profile Report

St. Louis County	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Students with MD	220	256	267	281	288
Total Students with Disabilities	24,007	25,529	26,153	27,237	26,842
MD County Incident Rate	.14%	.17%	.18%	.19%	.19%
MO state incident rate students with MD	.10%	.10%	.11%	.11%	.12%

Figure 2 depicts the level of placement of students with multiple disabilities in St. Louis County according to the State special education profile. Data is based on State Profile Report November 2004 (DESE). During both years students are equally split between general education placements and special education placements.

Figure 2:Placement

	2002-2003	2003-2004
0-21%	21	30
21-60%	37	42
+60%	82	83
Separate Public	130	123
Separate Private	1	1
Homebound	11	10
SNAP	1	1
Career Training	1	0

Figure 3 shows the number of students with the diagnosis of multiple disabilities in the NEXT program in St. Louis County. The NEXT program serves students age 19-21 who requires moderate support in a community based setting after attending a high school setting for 4 years. There are no students from the special education schools in the NEXT or PREP programs. The special education schools are providing similar programs as part of their programming.

Figure 3: NEXT Program

NEXT Students with Multiple Disabilities	West Region
2003-2004	1
2004-2005	7

Multiple Disabilities Quality Indicators

The committee reviewed professional literature and developed the following quality indicators of best practice. The indicators were used to serve as a basis for the development of the teacher, parent and agency surveys.

I. CAREER EXPLORATION: The program provides opportunities, activities and instruction for students to explore options in post-secondary careers.

1. Instruction provides opportunities to explore post-secondary career options.
2. Opportunity to visit agencies that may be appropriate for post-secondary placement.
3. Instruction in a variety of job opportunities on school campus.
4. Instruction in community based instruction for vocational training.
5. Instruction in community based instruction for essential skill training.

II. POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION EXPLORATION: The program provides opportunities, activities and instruction for students to explore options in post-secondary education.

1. Opportunities to discuss and choose post-secondary education exploration.
2. Preparing students for pre-requisites for selected post-secondary education placements.

III. SOCIAL SKILLS: Instruction, activities and opportunities in recreation/social activities and in social skills.

1. Instruction and opportunities in recreation and social activities outside of school and at school.
2. Instruction and opportunities provided in socializing with friends at school and outside of school.
3. Instruction in and opportunities provided for students to access various community settings.
4. Instruction in appropriate social skills for a variety of community activities

IV. SKILLS IN ACCESSING TRANSPORTATION/LIVING ARRANGEMENTS/ MEDICAL ISSUES: Instruction to prepare students to be independent in accessing community resources.

1. Instruction in the use of a variety of means of community transportation.

2. Instruction in living skills appropriate to the students' needs and abilities.
3. Instruction in communicating medical needs and accessing appropriate people for help.

V. SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS/PERSONAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS: Preparation and instruction in self-determination and personal management skills.

1. Instruction in functional/essential skills.
2. Instruction in participating in IEP.
3. Instruction in "stranger danger".
4. Instruction in personal hygiene.
5. Instruction in accessing personal insurance.
6. Instruction in accessing financial assistance.

VI. STAFF KNOWLEDGE: Staff knowledgeable of agencies and prerequisites for agency placements.

1. Teachers are knowledgeable about agencies that student with multiple disabilities may be placed.
2. Teachers invite agencies to the students' IEPs.
3. Teachers have knowledge of and use the Transition Planning Assessments (SSD).

VII. FAMILY PARTICIPATION: Families understand their child's needs while in school and for post-secondary placements.

1. Families understand the participation in community based and vocational training.
2. Families know the entrance criteria for agencies for post-secondary placements.
3. Families participate in their child's Future Plan.
4. Families access agencies during their child's schooling.
5. There is communication between school and home regarding the child's future needs (transition assessment, transition guidebook, resource directory).

Teacher Surveys

Surveys were sent out to 75 teachers, each teacher could complete up to 3 surveys for each of the students with the diagnosis of multiple disabilities on their caseload. A total of 116 surveys could have been returned. There were 66 surveys returned yielding a 57% return rate.

The survey asked what district the teacher worked in and some demographic information of the student they were completing the survey on, including the age, sex, race and placement. There were 5 questions asking the teachers their use of Transition Guidebooks, Future's plans, Resource Directory, Transition Planning Assessments all created by SSD and whether or not the student has a Regional Center Case Manager.

67% of the surveys returned were teachers that teach in the special education schools. There was a fairly consistent return rate of the age of students except for only 5% were 21 years old. 64% of the students were male and 36% were female. Of the surveys returned 51% of the students were white and 43% were African American. 53% of the students did not have a paraprofessional assigned to them, 21% had a paraprofessional with them more than 60% of the day.

57% of the teachers said that their student had a future's plan whereas 83% stated that they have provided information from the transition guidebook to the student's parents. 78% of they surveys stated that the teachers had given information from the Resource Directory to the students' parents. 78% of the teachers stated that they use the transition planning assessments to assist with student's planning, 73% state that their student has a regional center case manager and 60 % said that they know what outside agencies to contact to make a smooth transition from school to post-secondary placements.

Of the surveys returned 49% of the teachers said that their students did not have an opportunity to explore post-secondary career options and 42% said that they had not had the opportunity to visit agencies. 34% had visited day habilitation agencies and 26% sheltered work shops.

56% of the students had not had the opportunity to decide what career options they want and 51% had participated in a variety of jobs within the school environment. 78% of the students had not participated in community based instruction for vocational training, but 80% had participated in community based instruction for essential skills training (functional skills). 96% of the surveys said that the students would not participate in any education past high school or that education past high school was not applicable.

There were 26 additional questions on the teachers' survey. The ratings were based on a Likert scale, with a rating of 1 representing strongly disagree and a rating of 5 denoting strongly agree. Overall, the staff indicated that they agreed the majority of

quality indicators were in their programs. There were 11 areas of strength on the indicators for which scores were at or above a 4.0 average. The strengths are noted in Table 3.

Table 3. Strength Areas on Staff Survey (mean of 4.0 and above)

Indicator	Mean
The program is preparing this student to display appropriate social skills while engaged in school or community activities to his/her full potential.	4.5
The program is preparing this student to express opinions and needs to his/her full potential.	4.4
The program is preparing this student to utilize functional/essential skills to his/her full potential.	4.4
The program is preparing this student to manage personal hygiene to his/her full potential.	4.3
The program is preparing this student to be able to participate in recreation/social activities at school to his/her full potential.	4.3
The program is preparing this student to be able to participate with friends in activities at school to his/her full potential.	4.3
The program is preparing this student to participate in his/her full potential.	4.3
The program is preparing this student to access various community settings (i.e., movies, grocery store, library) to his/her full potential.	4.2
The program is preparing this student to be able to participate in recreation/social activities outside of school to his/her full potential.	4.1
The program is preparing this student to have the skills needed for the selected post-secondary living arrangement to his/her full potential.	4.1
The program is preparing this student to demonstrate "stranger danger" to his/her full potential.	4.1

There were seven indicators for which the average scores were 3.6-3.9. These areas are considered progressing. They are itemized in Table 4. There were no items below the average of 3.6. The highest scores were in social skills and knowledge of their post-secondary living environment.

Table 4. Progressing Areas on Staff Survey (mean between 3.6-3.9)

Indicator	Mean
The program is preparing this student to be able to participate with friends	3.9

in activities outside of school to his/her full potential.	
The program is preparing this student to know what is realistic for his post-secondary living environment to his/her full potential.	3.9
The program is preparing this student to know who to go to when he/she has a medical need to his or her full potential.	3.8
The program is preparing this student to access financial assistance to his/her full potential.	3.7
The program is preparing this student to be able to use various means of community transportation (i.e. walk, bike, car) to his/her full potential.	3.6
The program is preparing this student to access insurance to his/her full potential.	3.6

Parent Surveys

Surveys were sent out randomly to 128 parents of students with multiple disabilities ages 14 and above. There were only 27 returned for a return rate of 21%. Of the surveys returned only 2 were from the special education schools the rest were from the partner district schools. The majority of the respondents, 15 had children ages 17 or younger.

There were 5 questions regarding demographics of the student, including the age, sex, race and placement of the child they were filling out a survey on. There were 7 yes/no questions asking the parents their access to Transition Guidebooks, Future's plans, Resource Directory, Transition Planning Assessments all created by SSD and whether or not the student has a Regional Center Case Manager.

Of the surveys returned 68% of the parents said they had a student who was white, 28% African American and 4% other. 54% of the parents said that their child had a paraprofessional with their child for more than 60% of the school day. When asked whether or not there is a future plan in place for their child 52% said no. 60% of the parents/guardians said that they had been provided information from the Transition Guidebook. And 62% said they had been provided information from the Resource Directory. 64% said that the Transition Planning Assessments had not been used to assist with their child's transition planning. 73% of the respondents did have a regional center case manager assigned to their child.

62% of the respondents stated that they had no opportunity to explore any post-secondary options. And 82% stated that they had not had the opportunity to visit any agencies which provide post-secondary options. 84% of the parents/guardians felt that their child had not had the opportunity to decide what career options he/she wants.

Equally, 50-50 parents said that their child participated in a variety of jobs in the school environment. 81% responded that their child had not participated in community based instruction for vocational training. 56% stated that their child had not participated in any community-based instruction for essential skill training.

There were 18 additional questions on the parent survey. The ratings were based on a Likert scale, with a rating of 1 representing strongly disagree and a rating of 5 denoting strongly agree. The parents rated the program between 2.3 and 3.8 stating that there are some challenges to the program to progressing in some areas.

There were 11 areas in the range of progressing, 3.0-3.8. The areas of progressing are indicated in the following table.

Table 5. Progressing area on parent survey (3.0-4.0)

Indicator	Mean
The program is preparing this student to participate in his/her IEP to his/her full potential.	3.8
The program is preparing this student to display appropriate social skills while engaged in school or community activities to his/her full potential.	3.7
The program is preparing this student to express opinions and needs to his/her full potential.	3.7
The program is preparing this student to utilize functional/essential skills to his/her full potential.	3.6
The program is preparing this student to manage personal hygiene to his/her full potential.	3.6
The program is preparing this student to be able to participate in recreation/ social activities at school to his/her full potential.	3.5
The program is preparing this student to be able to participate with friends in activities at school to his/her full potential.	3.4
The program is preparing this student to access various community settings (i.e. movies, grocery store, library) to his/her full potential.	3.2
The program is preparing this student to be able to participate in recreation/ Social activities outside of school to his/her full potential.	3.2
The program is preparing this student to demonstrate "stranger danger" to his/her full potential.	3.1
The program is preparing this student to know who to go to when he/she has a medical need to his/her full potential.	3.0

There were 7 areas that the parents saw as a concern less than 3.0. These are indicated in Table 6.

Table 6 Parent survey areas of concern (< 3.0)

Indicator	Mean
The program is preparing this student to be able to participate with friends in activities outside of school to his/her full potential.	2.9
The program is preparing this student to know what is realistic for his post-secondary living environment to his/her full potential.	2.8
This program is preparing this student to be able to communicate his/her medical needs to his/her full potential.	2.6
The program is preparing this student to be able to use various means of community transportation (i.e. walk, bike, car) to his/her full potential.	2.5
The program is preparing this student to access financial assistance to his/her full potential.	2.4
The program is preparing this student to have the skills needed for the selected post-secondary living arrangement to his/her full potential.	2.3
The program is preparing this student to access insurance to his/her full potential.	2.3

Agency Surveys

There were 32 surveys sent out to agencies identified in the SSD parent resource directory under the section Multiple Disabilities. Only 5 were sent back for a 16% return rate.

There was one yes/no question, with a section for comments at the end of the survey. Of the surveys returned 75% stated that there is not usually a waiting list for placement at their agency.

There were 23 questions using ratings that were based on a Likert scale, with a rating of 1 representing strongly disagree and a rating of 5 denoting strongly agree. Overall the agencies saw the program as progressing or in the concern range. The following indicators in Table 7 are in the progressing range 3.0-4.0.

Table 7. Agency survey in progressing range (3.0-4.0)

Indicator	Mean
I attend IEPs of student that are receiving services from Special school district regularly.	3.8
SSD's program is preparing students to display appropriate social skills	3.6

while engaged n school or community	
Upon application to your agency for post secondary services, the SSD families understand what you agency can provide.	3.2
SSD's program is preparing students to be able to communicate their medical needs to their full potential.	3.2
The intake packet gives a clear image of what support need the student requires.	3.0
Information is given to the schools, counselors and SSD Special Education Schools about the agency annually.	3.0
The SSD families/guardians have all of the necessary information to complete the intake package.	3.0
Special School District's program is preparing students to be able to participate in recreation/social activities to their full potential.	3.0
Special School District's program is preparing students to be able to participate with friends in activities to their full potential.	3.0
SSD's program is preparing students to access various community settings to their full potential.	3.0
SSD's program is preparing students to use various means of community transportation to their full potential.	3.0

The following indicators were in the areas of concerns and are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Agency survey in concern range (<3.0)

Indicator	Mean
The SSD teachers that I work with understand the entrance criteria of the agency.	2.7
The SSD program is preparing students for placement at the agency.	2.7
SSD's program is preparing students to have the skills needed for the selected post-secondary living arrangement.	2.6
SSD's program is preparing students to be able to demonstrate "stranger danger" to their full potential.	2.5
SSD's program is preparing students to know what is realistic for their post-secondary living environments.	2.2
SSD is preparing students to be able to access insurance to their full potential.	2.0
SSD's program is preparing students to be able to access financial assistance to their full potential.	2.0

Comparison

In comparing the teacher and parent survey there was a significant discrepancy between all of the rating questions. There were three statements that stand out as more that a 1.0 difference. These are indicated in Table 9.

Table 9. Comparison of Teacher and Parent survey (>1.0 discrepancy)

Indicator	Mean	
	Teacher	Parent
The program is preparing this student to have the skills needed for the selected post-secondary living arrangement to his/her full potential.	4.1	2.3
The program is preparing this student to access financial assistance financial assistance to his/her potential.	3.7	2.4
The program is preparing this student to be able to communicate his/her medical needs to his/her full potential.	3.8	2.6

There is also a significant discrepancy between three of the yes/no questions. The teachers indicated a significantly higher percentage of yes' on the following three indicators. Those are indicated in Table 10.

Table 10. Comparison of teacher and parent survey (% of yes)

Indicator	Mean	
	Teacher	Parent
This student has participated in Community Based Instruction for essential skill training (i.e. grocery store, leisure activities, etc.).	80%	44%
This student has had the opportunity to decide what career options they want.	44%	16%
I use the Transition Planning Assessments (Level A, B, C, D, or E) to assist with this student's Transition Planning.	78%	44%

Teacher, Parent, Agency Survey Comparison

The parents and the agencies means on best practice indicators were not significantly discrepant. They answered similarly on 80% of the Likert questions (< .8

difference in mean scores). However both the agencies and the parents were discrepant in their answers from the teachers on 80% of the questions.

This brings the committee to the conclusion that the teachers perceive the program meeting the needs of the students with multiple disabilities better than how the parents or the agencies perceive the program.

File Review

The steering committee completed a file review of 42 student files. The files were identified to provide a representational sampling of placement of students 14 years and above in partner districts, SSD schools and Missouri School for the Blind. The steering committee looked for two demographic criteria of the child to see if the diagnosis impacted programming/placement of the child. The first question was, "When did the student initially qualified for the diagnosis of multiple disabilities, and did they have any previous diagnosis?" and the second, "What is the placement of the student and where there any previous placements?"

Of the 42 files reviewed 22 of the students have had the diagnosis since their initial school age diagnosis. 33 of the files were from students from the special education schools. 24 of the students have been in that level of service since their initial diagnosis. Two of the students had moved in from out of state. 5 students moved from a less restrictive placement to a special education school at some time during their schooling. One of the files that we pulled had moved from a special education school to less than 21% in a general education school. One student moved to the Missouri School for the Blind after a brain trauma and received the diagnosis of multiple disabled.

The conclusion from the file review is that of the files reviewed we saw no correlation between receiving a diagnosis of MU and being placed in a more restrictive placement. In fact there appears to be little moving between placements for the students that were reviewed. See Appendix 4.1.

Large Group Survey Work

At our first large group meeting on March 9, 2005 a survey was handed out to everyone who attended. The questions and the summary of the responses can be found in Appendix 5-1. The small work group committee reviewed the answers and decided that most people had more questions about the diagnosis of MU. The first six questions were

open ended and 13 people responded to the questions. The attendees are listed in Appendix 1-1. There were SSD facilitators, teachers, parents, agency representatives and general education administrators.

The large work committee then worked in small groups to answer the five Board of Education approved questions. The summary of those discussions can be found in Appendix 5-3.

Interviews

There were 2 interviews conducted by the steering committee. One person interviewed was an SSD diagnostic Effective Practice Specialist the other an agency representative.

The steering committee interviewed Jan Thompson, Diagnostic EPS on February 17, 2005. The main reason for interviewing her was to gain a diagnosticians perspective on the history of the diagnosis of multiple disabilities. The information gathered is as follows:

- Multiple disabilities has evolved over the past 17 years from deaf/blind to profound/severe MR and deaf/blind to the current eligibility criteria. The current criteria can be found in Appendix 6-1.
- The current eligibility criteria was set in 1997.
- Special School District interprets the criteria as a student with significant health concerns, and/or multiple disabilities, which cannot be separated, denote where one starts and cannot separate issues.
- The diagnosticians at times have to use professional judgment along with creating a palatable situation when giving the diagnosis.
- The criteria no longer require that a level of mental retardation have to be specified.
- It was felt that a student diagnosed with MU provided the student with more services especially in a general education setting.
- In literature the word "severe" is used on how the disability impact education and daily living skills.
- The diagnosis multiple disabilities covers a large umbrella depending on many circumstances, i.e.: number of diagnosis, parents, where attending school.
- Some concerns and suggestions from the interview: diagnosticians really need to be clear about the diagnosis when it is given, making sure it is used appropriately, when reevaluating really working as a team to determine whether or not to continue the diagnosis.

The second informal interview conducted was with Shari Clay from the United Cerebral Palsy agency on March 9, 2005. Ms. Clay provided the steering committee and the large work group with information regarding parents and students accessing agencies after high school. Ms. Kathleen Featherstone from the St. Louis Regional Center concurred with the statements. Following were some of her concerns and recommendations:

- Funding is the main issue for agencies currently.
- Not knowing how the state funding is going to impact the agencies.
- Medicaid being cut from families will impact agencies.
- Families need to tour agencies and be able to give a clear picture of their child to the agencies so that they may be placed appropriately.
- Videotaping and portfolios are very helpful for agencies.
- It is very important that every family is connected with the Regional Center to help with the transition to post-high school placements.
- Agencies use the Missouri Critical Adaptive Behaviors Inventory to help with placements. Appendix 7-1.

Chapter VI

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The committee members met to review, assimilate, and analyze the program evaluation data. A review of the cost analyses, surveys, file review and work from the large work committee were used as a basis for the outcomes of this evaluation.

Cost Analysis

Although cost analysis was not a direct question, the committee did feel it was important to note the cost in this report. The costs of the program were provided to the committee by the director of finance. The most costly service was for students with multiple disabilities educated in a purchase of service agency is $41,503, followed by students with multiple disabilities educated in a public separate school is $36,589, then by students in self-contained classrooms in partner districts is $27,571, then by students who spend up to 60% of their day in a special education setting is $11,560. The average paraprofessional costs $25,569. According to a random survey returned by 58 teachers, 27 of their students age 14 years and above have paraeducator support for some part of their day.   All students with multiple disabilities do not have a paraprofessional with them all day. Some students are in a classroom with a paraprofessional in the classroom and some have a paraprofessional assigned to them for part of a day. Since 50% of the students are receiving their education in a general education building and the other 50% are in a public separate school. It was found that the difference between educating a student in a separate school is similar in cost to educating a student in a general education school with a paraprofessional assigned to him/her for all or part of the school day.

Strengths

Several areas of strength were identified. Teachers consistently felt that the programs offered to students 14 yrs and above were preparing the students appropriately in the areas of social skills while engaged in school or community activities, the ability to express their opinions and needs and utilizing functional skill/essential skills to their full potential.

The parents of students that were 14 years and above felt that the SSD program was preparing the students to participate in their IEP, have appropriate social skills while in the school or community and able to express opinions and needs to their full potential.

The agencies surveyed saw the strengths of the program that is preparing the students to display appropriate social skills while engaged in school or community activities, able to express their opinions and needs appropriately, and able to manage their hygiene appropriately.

Weaknesses

The evaluation identified several main areas of challenge. One was the general understanding on the definition of the diagnosis of multiple disabilities. There is some confusion regarding "Severely Handicapped", "Multiple Disabilities", and "Deaf/Blind" as diagnosis that could describe students that meet under the Multiple Disabilities criteria.

From the surveys returned there was a significant discrepancy between the scores of the teachers and the parents on the programming and how the district was preparing the students for post-secondary activities. There was also a discrepancy between the agency and the teacher's perceptions except in the areas of communication and self-advocacy.

The largest discrepancy was the perception of how the program is preparing the students the skills needed for post-secondary living arrangements. On one hand the teachers' perceive this as a strength, 4.1, where the parents felt this was a challenge 2.3.

Both the teachers and parents saw as a weakness of the program the ability of students to decide what career options they want, community based instruction for vocational training and the ability to explore and visit post-secondary options and agencies. Also, 78% of the teachers surveyed stated that they had provided transition planning assessments with their students while only 36% of the parents said that the Transition planning assessment was used.

Limitations

The data collected for this evaluation provided the committee with a significant amount of information that had not previously been reviewed as a whole to lead towards systemic improvement. However, in the process of data analysis, the committee noted several limitations that may have affected the reported results. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results and designing future program evaluation activities.

1. Only 5 out of 32 agencies returned the survey.

2. Student input was not included.

3. Information from students less than 14 years of age was not collected.

4. Nobody attended the Public Forum.

Recommendations

The recommendations address identified needs in the areas of parent and agency communication and teacher training. Action plans will be developed by the program evaluation steering committee to address the recommendations and align them with the district's rolling plan objectives.

1. Work with the Special School District Transition Department to include students with Multiple Disabilities and their expansive needs in the department's action plans.

2. Transition Assessment results will be discussed with the parent at the child's IEP meeting and included in the present level.

3. Explain and discuss with parents their child's programming including community-based instruction.

4. Train teachers to invite appropriate agencies to IEP meetings and provide the agencies with accurate information about the program of the child.

5. Discuss with parents what training has been provided to their child on living arrangements.

6. Explore why students have not had opportunities to explore post-secondary placements or agencies.

7. Include students with Multiple Disabilities in community-based vocational training.

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APPENDIX