



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Focused Monitoring Report

of the

Springfield School District

Date of On-Site Review: February 7-11, 2011

Monitoring Team Members:

Assigned Monitoring Facilitator: Ernie Wheeler, VTDOE Consultant

Emmanuelle Monteith, Parent Member

Mary Nelson, LEA Peer Member

Alicia Hanrahan, VTDOE Monitoring Team Leader

Patti Snow, VTDOE Monitoring Team Consultant

Kate Rogers, VTDOE Essential Early Education Consultant

Mike Bailey, VTDOE Special Consultant

Amy Whitehorne, VTDOE Staff Attorney

Table of Contents

I. DESCRIPTION OF MONITORING AUTHORITY AND FOCUSED MONITORING ..	3
II. FOCUSED MONITORING METHODOLOGY	4
III. SUPERVISORY UNION BACKGROUND.....	6
IV. COMMENDATIONS FOR THE LEA RELATED TO THE INDICATORS.....	9
V. LEA TRIANGULATED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	11
VI. AREAS OF CONCERN RELATED TO THE INDICATORS.....	15
VII. NON-COMPLIANCE IN RELATED REQUIREMENTS.....	16
VIII. IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROCESS	18

The focused monitoring team wishes to thank all school and community members who participated or provided information during our visit.

I. Description of Monitoring Authority and Focused Monitoring

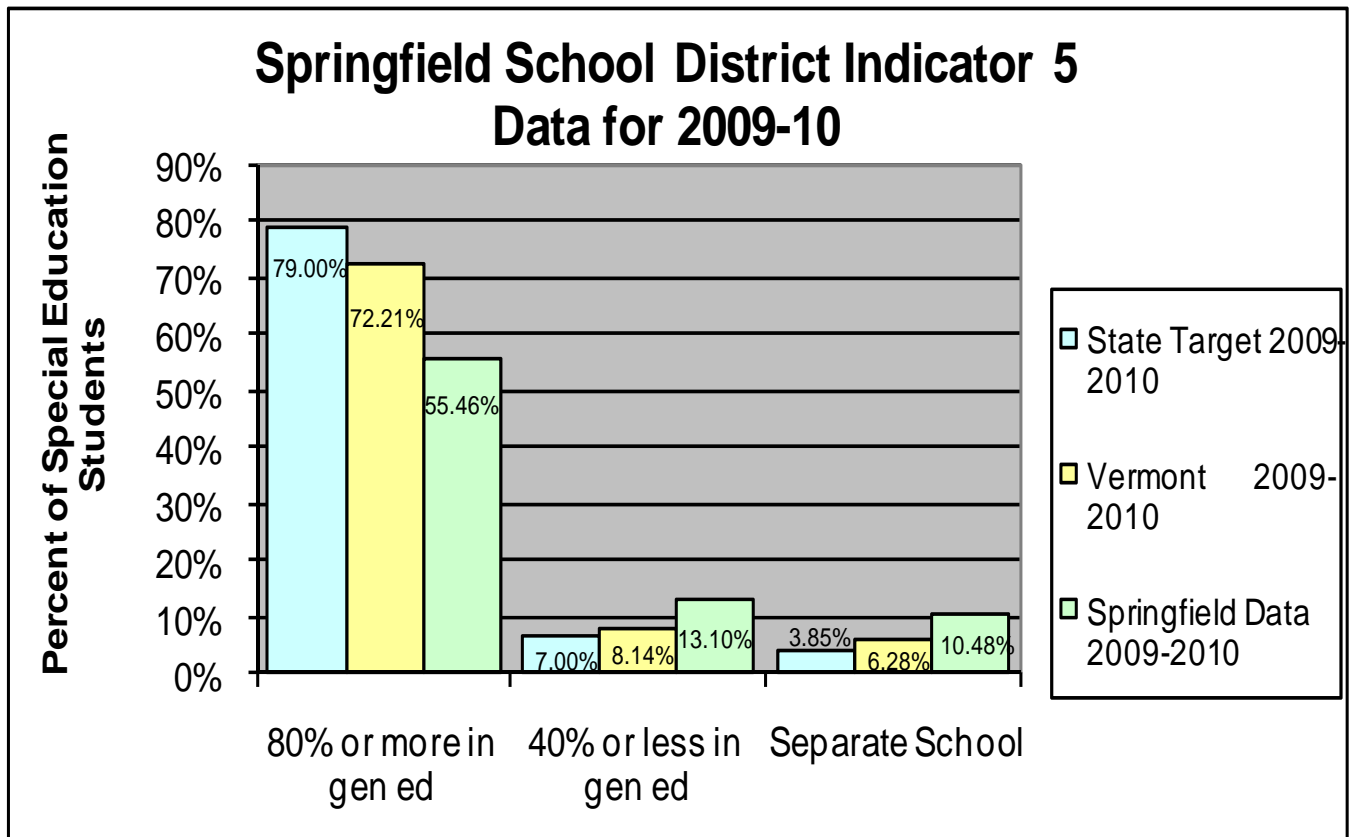
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (20 U.S.C. 1400 (c)(1)), provides federal funds to assist states in educating children with disabilities and requires each participating state to ensure that school districts and other publicly-funded educational agencies in the state comply with the requirements of IDEA and its implementing regulations. Further, Section 616 of IDEA states that the primary focus of Federal and State monitoring activities shall be on improving education results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities and ensuring that States meet the program requirements with a particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities. Vermont state law requires local education agencies to provide appropriate special education and related services and requires the Vermont Department of Education (VTDOE) to establish, monitor, and enforce regulations governing special education programs in the Vermont public schools and all institutions wholly or partly supported by the state. The state has adopted regulations implementing those requirements which are administered by VTDOE. VTDOE supervises and conducts the general supervision process in furtherance of the state's obligations under IDEA and Vermont law.

Focused Monitoring is a new approach to assess compliance with federal and state special education law and regulations while also addressing critical performance areas. It is a shift from a culture of compliance to a culture of accountability. It places the focus of a monitoring review on results versus process. The principles of Focused Monitoring are identified as follows:

- Focused Monitoring includes a limited number of priorities chosen by a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Available data are used to select priorities that will improve student educational performance, increase independence for children with disabilities, and lead to full participation in society.
- A limited number of indicators are identified within each priority area and are used as the basis for district ranking and selection for on-site reviews.
- A Focused Monitoring system is data and information-based. Data-based information is used to allocate limited resources in the direction of most need, which are determined by identifying what is most likely to lead to improvement in student performance.
- There is a relationship between monitoring and corrective actions—solutions are linked to the identified problems. Corrective actions are designed to create systemic changes that result in improved student performance.
- Families have the opportunity to provide information on a continuous basis.

II. Focused Monitoring Methodology

The Springfield School District (SSD) was selected for an on-site visit based upon their performance on the State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator 5 regarding Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). See the graph below which documents the 2009-10 state target, our average performance as a state and SSD's performance in regards to Indicator 5:



The following shows the four year trend data for the State and SSD for Indicator 5:

For IEP students in a General Education Environment 80% or more of the day:

SCHOOL YEAR	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
State Average	69.95%	69.82%	72.21%	73.90%
Springfield School District	46.15%	54.95%	55.46%	59.51%

The data indicates that the district has made continual progress in the 80% or more in the general education environment category, although well below the state average for the same time period the SSD has closed the 23.80% gap seen in the 2007-08 school year down to 14.41% below the state average.

For IEP students in a General Education Environment less than 40% of the day:

SCHOOL YEAR	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
State Average	9.47%	8.90%	8.14%	7.08%
Springfield School District	11.31%	13.06%	13.10%	10.81%

Whereas the state average has dropped consistently over the past four years, the trend data above shows that the SSD performance on this portion of Indicator 5 has fluctuated. In the current year SSD's percentage has dropped to a level closer to the state average than it had in the previous two years.

For IEP students in a separate school, residential facility or are home/hospital bound:

SCHOOL YEAR	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
State Average	9.47%	8.90%	8.14%	7.08%
Springfield School District	11.31%	10.36%	10.48%	9.91%

Again, within this section of the Indicator 5 data, the state average has declined steadily whereas the SSD percentage has also declined but it has not been quite as pronounced.

Another data point that resulted in the selection of the SSD for focused monitoring was the dropout rate. The following reflects the dropout rate in SSD for the past four years:

School Year	District Dropout Percentage	State Dropout Percentage
2005-06	9.17%	2.85%
2006-07	8.48%	3.08%
2007-08	6.46%	3.25%
2008-09	10.15%	2.89%

According to the figures the SSD, historically, has been well above the state dropout percentage.

The on-site Focused Monitoring review was conducted during the week of February 7-11, 2011. During this time, the team visited the two elementary schools, one middle school, one high school and two collaborative programs located within the school district. In addition, the Monitoring Team also reviewed and analyzed the following data prior to and during the on-site review.

Data Reviewed

- LRE data by disability, educational environment/ placement code, grade, and school building
- Local Planning Team's portfolio of evidence
- Vermont Agency of Human Services Community Profile 2007
- Local Report of State Performance Plan indicators

- Special education policies/procedures/forms/practices
- Family/school collaboration related to LRE via parent forum and interviews
- Educational Support Team (EST), Section 504 and Special Education files

Parent Surveys

A survey monkey was developed to inquire about the experience parents within the SSD had with the school district, personnel and support services provided to their children. Letters were mailed to parents asking them to complete an online survey or to call the VTDOE so that the survey could be completed over the phone. The letter also gave parents an opportunity to request to the on-site Monitoring Team if the parents did not want any of their children to be interviewed as part of this focused monitoring visit.

On-Site Interviews

Interviews were conducted with seven general and special education administrators, from the district schools and central office levels, four Educational Support Team chairpersons, twenty-two general and special education teachers, five paraeducators, and one related service provider. The focused monitoring team also interviewed or spoke with ten parents as part of this visit.

Record Reviews

File reviews were conducted for 42 students with either Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Section 504 Plans or Educational Support Team (EST) Plans.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted in each of the following schools and/or programs:

1. **The Gateway Program**
2. **The Essential Early Education Program**
3. **The Occupational Development Program**
4. **Classrooms at the Elm Hill and Union Street Schools**
5. **Classrooms at Springfield High School and Riverside Middle School**
6. **Planning Rooms within the Springfield School District**

III. Supervisory Union Background

The following information is taken from the 2007 Agency of Human Services (AHS) Community Profile. The AHS profiles use supervisory union boundaries when presenting data for a particular community. Thus, the information below concerns the town of Springfield which solely comprises the Springfield School District.

Springfield School District

School Name	Grades Served	2010-11 Enrollment
<i>Elm Hill Elementary</i>	(K-2)	299
<i>Union Elementary</i>	(3-5)	293
<i>Riverside Middle School</i>	(6-8)	303
<i>Springfield High School</i>	(9-12)	488

According to the Agency of Human Services, the total population for this community was 8,792 in 2006.

The following information comes directly from the AHS profile:

Percent of children (ages 0-4) in families receiving welfare (proxy for poverty) in 2006

Vermont	Springfield Community	Difference
9.1%	16.0%	+6.9%

Percent of children (ages 5-17) in families receiving welfare in 2006

Vermont	Springfield Community	Difference
4.3%	9.1%	+4.8%

Percent of kindergartners who met standards of readiness in 5 domains in 2007:

Vermont	Springfield Community	Difference
44%	28%	-16.0%

Young teen pregnancy rate per 1,000 females ages 15-17 in 2004

Vermont	Springfield Community	Difference
15.8	11.9	-3.9

Percent of 8th grade students who have () in the past 30 days in 2007

	Vermont	Springfield Community	Difference
<i>Smoked Cigarettes</i>	7%	12%	+5%
<i>Smoked Marijuana</i>	8%	14%	+6%
<i>Used Alcohol</i>	19%	32%	+13%

Reports of child abuse and neglect per 10,000 children ages 0-17 in 2006

	Vermont	Springfield Community	Difference
	84.5	162.8	+78.3

2006 Custody rate for children(per 10,000 ages 10-17) deemed:

	Vermont	Springfield Community	Difference
<i>Unmanageable</i>	28.5	61.1	+32.6
<i>Delinquent</i>	52.7	88.5	+35.8

Socioeconomic Data:

	Vermont	Springfield Community	Difference
<i>Average Annual Wage (2006)</i>	\$34,974	\$32,023*	-\$2,951
<i>Median Family Income (1999)</i>	\$48,625	\$42,620	-\$6,005
<i>Percent of People above poverty level (1999)</i>	90.6%	90.2%	-0.4%

* as measured by county, not community

New England Common Assessment Program 2010 Data (from the Standards and Assessment Division of the Vermont Department of Education)

Elm Hill Elementary School

School Trend Data

2010	School	State			2006	2007	2008	2009
Reading	74%	73%		Reading	72%	73%	76%	77%
Math	64%	65%		Math	73%	67%	72%	63%
Writing	75%	50%		Writing	62%	58%	79%	N/A
Science	80%	54%		Science	N/A	N/A	55%	35%

Union Street Elementary School

School Trend Data

2010	School	State			2006	2007	2008	2009
Reading	65%	73%		Reading	57%	62%	65%	63%
Math	52%	65%		Math	55%	60%	60%	58%
Writing	44%	50%		Writing	40%	41%	39%	N/A
Science	43%	54%		Science	N/A	N/A	51%	65%

Riverside Middle School

School Trend Data

2010	School	State			2006	2007	2008	2009
Reading	58%	73%		Reading	51%	62%	67%	64%
Math	46%	65%		Math	46%	41%	30%	45%
Writing	45%	62%		Writing	27%	28%	30%	N/A
Science	11%	29%		Science	N/A	N/A	14%	10%

Springfield High School

School Trend Data

2010	School	State			2006	2007	2008	2009
Reading	65%	72%		Reading	N/A	51%	66%	58%
Math	24%	38%		Math	N/A	17%	26%	33%
Writing	25%	49%		Writing	N/A	26%	38%	33%
Science	18%	28%		Science	N/A	N/A	14%	16%

IV. Commendations for the LEA Related to the Indicators

Relative to the State Performance Plan Indicators 5 & 6 (the pre-school Least Restrictive Environment Indicator), the following efforts and/or initiatives have been implemented by the Springfield School District. These activities have been recognized as effective components in Springfield's system for improving student outcomes.

- Evidence of good co-teaching models (Springfield High School and Riverside Middle School) were evident within the district. The district collaboration with Antioch College to provide district professional development seems to have been positively accepted and implemented. We hope this practice will continue and opportunities for collaboration time will be made available in teachers' schedules.
- Emerging discussion and interest at the elementary level, as well as the first year implementation of Positive Behavioral intervention Strategies (PBiS) at the Riverside Middle School is commended as a reaction to the issues surrounding student behavior management.
- The instructional coach at Springfield High School is commended for his ability to improve teaching strategies and ultimately student engagement and outcomes.
- Professional development was taken back by the central office allowing for greater opportunities to address specific district and individual school needs.
- A positive climate at the high school and the level of student respect was highly evident in our observation and visits to Springfield High School.
- Union Street School has developed a local progress monitoring program that enables staff to track the progress of students, intervention effectiveness, and the ability to incorporate significant local factors such as student attendance.
- The implementation of before and after school programs developed this year is to be commended. This response to a community and family need has resulted in high numbers of student participation. These programs have provided remedial and enrichment activities in a very supportive environment for many students.
- We saw or heard evidence of technology used throughout the district (EEE to the high school). This technology supported student access and performance within general education or natural environments (i.e., iPads, internet resources, Smart Boards, "Virtual Preschool Friends").
- The Union Street School Planning Room has a data system used to record the reason for student visits to the Planning Room. In turn, this triggers specific actions when certain levels are met. We would like to see the data system computerized for easier access and sharing as well as a time frame for the criteria levels.
- The Essential Early Education office is located within the community. Its collaboration with HeadStart and community preschool partners is very strong and allows for the inclusive placement of children in developmentally appropriate programs.
- The staff at the Elm Hill and Union Street Schools is commended for their involvement of parents throughout the Educational Support Team process.

- The district's non-traditional learners program is commended for its efforts to provide individualized programming, tutorial assistance and temporary placements for at risk students.
- The Precision Valley Program and staff is commended for their efforts to address the needs of the general and some special education population in a less restrictive setting than other out-placed programs.

V. LEA Triangulated Areas for Improvement (TAFI)

The Monitoring Team must validate a concern through three separate sources of data to issue a TAFI. These triangulations of data make certain that the information is truly valid and reliable. The Springfield School District must respond to these TAFIs in their improvement plan. Other issues or areas of concern (see Section VI of this report) that cannot be triangulated are identified, but they do not rise to the level of a finding. The district is encouraged to consider these issues and concerns within their Improvement Plan.

TAFI I: (VT Regulation 2194) The Educational Support Systems within the school district are inconsistent or ineffective, contributing to:

Supporting Evidence

1. A dropout rate for students that is more than three times the state average.
2. An Educational Support Team (EST) process that has not been implemented with integrity and fidelity for several years.
3. EST referrals that were either never acted upon or a written plan was not developed.
4. EST plans that were too general in nature to individualize to the needs of the student, to develop data gathering criteria to determine the effect of interventions and identify a date for an EST follow up review
5. Special education supports/services which are not all provided as written on student IEPs (counseling, occupational therapy, resource room).
6. Limited collaboration between district planning room personnel and the EST. This affects the ability of school staff to share information and to develop strategies that support academic skills and behavioral interventions.

Corrective Action

Educational Support Team procedures currently used within the SSD should be shared with the other schools within the school district to strengthen the effectiveness and documentation of their efforts on behalf of students.

A collaborative team must review the existing EST process available within the school district to determine areas where unmet needs exist. Strengths of existing practices within the school district should be highlighted and used as a model for implementation.

The collaborative team shall develop clear procedures and methods for collecting and analyzing data on student performance that will inform the decisions and efforts of the EST reviews.

The team shall develop clear guidelines to ensure that any placement decisions are data driven, and referrals made by classroom teachers or the EST for a special education evaluation include documentation of this information. The guidelines shall also ensure that placement decisions are made based on the individual needs of the child rather than a school's master schedule or an individual teacher's and/or related service provider's schedules.

Required Evidence of Correction

- Documentation of Educational Support Team procedures developed for the Springfield School District.
- Documentation of the collaborative team discussion regarding the development of consistent data collection, analysis, as it reflect in decisions regarding student programming..
- Documentation of procedures and methods developed regarding entrance and exit criteria for placement decisions.
- Documentation of guidelines developed to ensure that placement decisions are made based on a child's needs and includes defined time for reviewing the success of the placement.

TAFI II: The district's behavior/discipline system is inconsistent in addressing the needs of students. (VT Regulation)

Supporting Evidence

1. Lack of follow up to referrals
2. Lack of baseline data collection
3. Lack of progress monitoring on the effectiveness of interventions

4. Inconsistent use/analysis of functional behavioral assessments
5. Behavior plans, if written, which focus on punitive responses as opposed to positive outcomes or prevention
6. Students are removed from public school environments (LRE segregated settings data) with no evidence of FBAs to develop behavior plans, special education referrals or evaluations prior to the move
7. Communication between the school and parents is inconsistent

Corrective Actions

A collaborative team must develop a supervisory union plan to ensure consistent behavioral/discipline procedures are enacted and that data based decisions are made regarding interventions to be used with students or the placement of students in alternative programming.

Required Evidence of Correction

- Documentation must be submitted regarding the discipline procedures to be followed within the district, including evidence that personnel involved in restraint or seclusion have been trained in the use and implementation of such procedures that meet with the new State Regulation (Rule 4500) due to be in effect August, 15, 2011..
- Evidence of record keeping systems, criteria for determining follow-up actions by the school or school personnel, the development of positive behavior plans based upon functional behavior assessments, and the placements of students with behavioral challenges must be submitted to the VTDOE focused monitoring facilitator.

TAFI III: The Springfield School District could benefit from a review of current practices and procedures to develop a more cohesive system of communication and collaboration that would result in positive outcomes for staff and students.

Supporting Evidence

1. Interviews with staff reported the reliance on emails to disseminate time sensitive information from the central office to staff but the email cannot always be accessed by staff during the school day.
2. Staff and parents reported difficulty getting information from the district's evaluation team in advance of the eligibility decision meeting.

3. The closing of the Park Street School resulted in some confusion regarding staffing in the remaining elementary schools which continued to be addressed at the time of this site visit.
4. Support staff is unclear to whom they should be reporting to or directly supervised by: classroom teachers; special educators; principals; or the central office administration.
5. Interviews indicated that professional conduct standards were not always maintained in all public and private staff meetings. (The passion and concern all staff has for their students is evident in this district. This passion must be balanced with empathy for the administration's legitimate concerns for the delivery of services in an effective and cost-efficient manner.)
6. Student outcomes and progress are reportedly affected by case management loads and service delivery models implemented within the school district. The IEPs of some students indicate they are never seen by a special educator for their services.

Corrective Actions

A collaborative team must discuss and recommend procedures and practices that promote an effective communication process within the Springfield School District.

Required Evidence of Correction

- A description of the procedures and practices to be established to promote effective and professional conduct is maintained in private and public meetings will be provided to the focused monitoring facilitator.
- Documentation of how these new procedures and practices will be shared with district staff will be provided to the focused monitoring facilitator.

TAFI IV: The Child Find process within the district needs to be enhanced to identify young children suspected of having a disability.

Supporting Evidence

1. The percentage of preschool students identified for EEE services is lower than the State average.
2. A large number of initial referrals occur within the Union Street School (approximately 1/3 of the student population is on an IEP or 504 Plan).
3. Elementary-aged students enrolled in the Gateway program had not been previously been evaluated for special education services, had not had a previous preschool experience, nor prior EEE services.

Corrective Actions

A collaborative team must discuss and recommend procedures and practices that promote the earlier screening and/or identification of children with disabilities within the Springfield School District.

Required Evidence of Correction

- Documentation of the procedures and practices to be implemented to promote identification of at-risk children from the Springfield community will be shared with the focused monitoring facilitator.
- A description of how these new early screening/identification procedures and practices will be shared with district staff, community pre-school providers, and other local child care professionals shall be provided to the focused monitoring facilitator.

VI. Areas of Concern Related to the Indicators

Areas of concern were issues related to monitoring indicators that were not triangulated but are strongly encouraged to be reviewed by the local planning team for development within a district improvement plan.

- Interviews with parents, students, and staff indicated that the emphasis on the homework completion and/or the accumulation of credits drove daily programming and seemed more important than the remediation of basic skill deficits for disabled students.
- It is unclear if IEP students, due to scheduling constraints, have access to learning labs where homework assistance might be available.
- We heard from many staff and parents regarding the need for greater mental health services within the school district to address the current and growing needs of students and families.
- We heard from many staff regarding the school district's highly transient population with significant needs. This causes great difficulty in anticipating and providing needed school services.
- The following district practices should be evaluated for effectiveness:
 1. Employing one paraeducator for every class in Elm Hill and Union Street School
 2. The number of 1:1 paras employed throughout the district
 3. The number of special education staff and individual paraeducators associated with ODP

4. The case management and caseloads for special educators.
- Staff indicated that students were not often coming to school “ready to engage” in the learning process. Strategies and supports may need to be reviewed to address the need and response to this issue.
 - Special educators teaching classes for credit at the high school level (in the high school and specialized programs) are not highly qualified in all the subject areas for the grade level of their students.
 - It is unclear if IEP students, due to scheduling constraints, have access to learning labs where homework assistance might be available.
 - Drop out data is not always reported accurately. There does not seem to be a consistent effort to review, analyze or correct this particular data before it is submitted to the State. The district does not seem to have a procedure to contact drop outs in order to encourage their reentry into high school completion opportunities offered by the school district or area programs.

VII. Non-compliance in Related Requirements

Areas of Non-compliance in Related Requirements

Non-compliance issues are violations of state, federal, or state school board regulations or guidelines. The following instances of non-compliance must be corrected as soon as possible but no later than one year from the date of this report. The Springfield School District must include a response to each these areas in their Improvement Plan.

- There was a significant time lapse between when a special education referral was dated as received and the convening of an Evaluation Planning meeting (2-6 months).
- Initial evaluations did not meet the 60 day timeline and the notice of delay did not document a reason that would be considered an exceptional circumstance for the delay. **(Vermont Regulation 2362.2.1(b)(c))**
- The Adverse Effect section of Evaluation Reports lacked appropriate documentation for the minus 1.0 standard deviation or lowest 15th percentile. **(Vermont Regulation 2362(d)(1)(2))**
- Initials of required EPT members were not on several of the completed reports indicating their agreement with the eligibility decision. **(Vermont Regulation 2362.2.5(a)(5))**

- Triennial evaluations were not completed within the 3 year anniversary date. **(Vermont Regulation 2362.2.2(b)(2))**
- There is a waiting list for the completion of Occupational Therapy evaluations which does not seem prioritized and creates an evaluation timeline or a timely release from services issue. **(Vermont Regulations 2362.2.1(b)(c) and 2362.2.3(b)(3))**
- The central office file did not always contain a copy of the Form 6, consent to the provision of initial special education services. **(Vermont Regulation 2363.9(a))**
- Many IEPs were reviewed with initiation dates that were to commence one day after the IEP meeting. The concern is that parents may not be receiving copies of the final IEP prior to the start of services covered in that document. Parents are required by regulation to have prior written notice to the plan before it is implemented. **(Vermont Regulation 2365.1.1)**
- Required IEP Team members were not always listed as in attendance for meetings, particularly individuals to interpret educational implementations and individuals who can conduct diagnostic evaluations (an SLD requirement). **(Vermont Regulation 2363.4 (a))**
- An IEP meeting for a student in foster care did not include an educational surrogate. **(Vermont Regulation 2369)**
- Evidence of progress reporting was not always evident in files for either the current or past years. **(Vermont Regulation 2363.8(b)(4))**
- The educational environments (percent of time in general education) of students were not consistent with the description checked on the IEP and one LRE description was unchecked entirely. **(Vermont Regulation 2363.8(e))**
- Some special education services are not being provided as described on student's IEPs. **(Vermont Regulation 2363.3)**
- Consent to Initial Special Education Services (Form 6) forms found in student files were signed and dated after the student had already begun IEP services or were not found in files. **(Vermont Regulation 2363.9(a))**
- Multi-year plans were not considered for students until an upper high school grade level. State rule requires that such a plan shall be considered at the IEP meeting when a student turns 14. **(Vermont Regulation 2120.8.2.1(c))**
- Multi-year plans in files were unsigned, suggesting it was not completed as per State regulation. **(Vermont Regulation 2120.8.2.1(c))**

- IEPs and Evaluation Reports (school-aged) did not appropriately identify the disability category for students based upon either the most recent evaluation or the disability areas evaluated by the EPT. **(Vermont Regulation**
- At least one file did not document the district refusal to a parent request for services. Refusals to requests made by parents must be responded to, in writing, using State Form 7 or 7a. If the request is discussed and a consensus is reached at an IEP meeting different from the parental request, that decision should be reflected on the services page of the IEP and the final section of the IEP. **(Vermont Regulation 2365.1.1)**
- Special education teaching staff do not all have the appropriate licensure and/or highly qualified status for the programs or subject areas they currently teach. **(Vermont Regulation 2360.3.6)**
- **Use of an improper restraint technique was used to remove a child from their educational setting. District policy states that restraint techniques are to be conducted by trained personnel.**
- **Use of a hand-on-hand teaching technique was observed to physically coerce a young student to complete a task. This procedure is noted as an improper method of instruction with young children.**
- **The use of the timeout procedure implemented at the Gateway Program should be reviewed to ensure it meets the requirements of the recently adopted Restraint and Seclusion Rules (VT Rule 4500) that will be in effect August 15, 2011.**

VIII. Improvement Plan Process

Upon receiving the final report following a Focused Monitoring visit, the LEA is required to initiate the development of an Improvement Plan (which includes improvement activities related to the priority indicator and correction of non-compliance) with your VT-DOE monitoring facilitator within a period of 30 calendar days from the date of the final report. The Improvement Plan should be a comprehensive, interdisciplinary plan that targets LEA-wide improvement. In developing the plan, the LEA should consider the “findings related to the indicators”, “areas of concern related to the indicators,” “non-compliance in related requirements,” and the “supporting evidence,” “corrective actions,” and “required evidence of correction” contained within the findings. The VT-DOE Monitoring Facilitator will provide technical assistance and consultation during the development of the Improvement Plan. It is important to note that improvement activities may extend beyond one year, but the correction of non-compliance must happen within one year from the date of written notification via the final report.

In order to assure that the Improvement Plan is comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and LEA-wide, the plan must be developed by the collaborative team. This plan must not be a uniquely special

education response developed in isolation from other LEA initiatives. The VT-DOE Monitoring Facilitator provides technical assistance to the team in the vein of a facilitator. The Monitoring Facilitator does not provide the technical assistance that the LEA identifies it needs, but rather functions as a liaison for needed services.

Development of the Improvement Plan will include:

- Use of the VT-DOE template to develop the Improvement Plan
- Review the areas of noncompliance and the expected evidence of change in the final report
- Coordination of the e the Improvement Plan with other LEA initiatives
- Addressing the following components per activity:
 - What specific tasks/activities are planned to address the targeted area?
 - Why these particular tasks/activities were deemed most appropriate?
 - When the tasks/activities will be completed?
 - Who will complete the tasks/activities?
 - Why this activity will work to bring the LEA into compliance?
 - Who will monitor the progress and completion of activities?
 - What are the needed resources (fiscal, human) within/outside the LEA that will be used to implement change?
 - What are the deliverables, products, materials, documentation, or action plans that will be developed?
 - How will progress be monitored to ensure that the expected changes take place (self-assessment) and
 - What are the intended outcomes/impact related to the targeted area?

The VT-DOE Monitoring Team reviews the LEA's proposed Improvement Plan, requesting clarifications and revisions, as necessary. Upon approval of the Improvement Plan, the LEA is issued an approval letter that outlines the schedule of reporting the LEA's progress monitoring to VT-DOE. The purpose of this Monitoring Progress Report is to provide the LEA with a format in which to demonstrate evidence of their efforts to correct the deficiencies identified through the Focused Monitoring process. In addition, the process allows the LEA to monitor and evaluate the success of their Improvement Plan activities. The scheduling of the progress reports depends on the complexity of the Improvement Plan and the individual needs of the LEA.

Prior to the one year anniversary of notification via the final monitoring report, an Evidence of Change review meeting is scheduled between LEA representatives and the VT-DOE Monitoring Facilitator to assess whether the LEA has met or is making adequate progress towards meeting the required evidence of change at the expected standard as set by the LPT and approved by the VT-DOE. Based on the results of the meeting, the VT-DOE determines whether (1) the LEA has met the standards required and the Improvement Plan is officially closed, (2) the LEA has not met the standards required and additional time will be allowed with Improvement Plan amendments, or (3) sanctions will be imposed. The correction of non-compliance must occur within the one year timeline, the above refers to improvement activities related to the priority indicator.