

UPPER PERKIOMEN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Education Center
2229 E. Buck Road, Pennsburg, PA 18073
Pupil Service & Special Education Committee
January 25, 2021

CHAIR: Judy Maginnis

Ex-Officio: Melanie Cunningham, President

MEMBERS: Mike Elliott, Dr. Kerry Drake

Superintendent: Dr. Allyn Roche

Assistant Director of Special Education: Carol Giblin

Assistant Superintendent: Dr. Andrea Farina

Supervisor of Special Education: Amy Coyle

CALL TO ORDER Motion to approve October 26, 2020 meeting minutes made by Dr. Drake and seconded by Mike Elliott.

Carol Giblin began the meeting by explaining the current special education programming at each building. Marlborough has 1 Learning Support program and 1 Learning Support/Emotional Support program. Hereford has 1 Learning Support program, 1 Learning Support/Emotional Support program, and 2 Autistic Support programs. The 4th and 5th Grade Center has 2 Learning Support programs, 1 Learning Support/Emotional Support program, and 2 Autistic Support programs. The Middle School has 6 Learning Support programs (2 at each grade level), 1 Emotional Support program, 1 Autistic Support program, and 1 Life Skills Support program. The High School has 7 Learning Support programs, 1 Emotional Support program, 1 Life Skills Support program, 1 Autistic Support program, 1 Multiple Disabilities Support program, and 1 Work program (students 18-21 years of age).

Mike Elliott asked how/if the programming has grown over the years. Carol explained that we have added the emotional support programming at the elementary grades. The district went from 1 to 2 Autistic Support classrooms at the 4th and 5th Grade Center, due to a variety of factors including move in students, students requiring additional supports, increased programming. Dr. Farina added that Autistic Support has seen the most growth and our work program has maintained students continuing through the age of 21. This program has allowed us to bring back students who were attending out of district placements and complete their education in the district until the age of 21. Another factor that we look at is the students transitioning from Early Intervention. Each December through February there are meetings with the IU and families of students receiving Early Intervention services who will be entering Kindergarten the following school year. This helps us to preliminarily plan and budget for programming for the next school year.

Each year the state publishes a Special Education Annual Data Report called the State Performance Profile (SPP) report. The report is like our report card in that it tells us where we are with the state and what our targets are. The data for the report includes: enrollment, Indicator 1 (Graduation Rates); Indicator 5 (Education Environments, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)); Indicator 8 (Parent Involvement); Indicator 13 (Post-Secondary Goals and Transition Services); Indicator 14 (Post-School Outcomes).

Amy Coyle discussed the enrollment data from 2012-13 through 2018-19. The data compares the district with districts state-wide in terms of special education enrollment. From the 2012 through the 15-16 school years, Upper Perk had a higher percentage of special education students than the state's average. Beginning with the 16-17 school year and continuing through the 18-19 school year, Upper Perk's percentage was below the state's average. When there is a discrepancy between the state and a school district, the district is issued a Corrective Action. At the end of the 14-15 school year, Upper Perk was tasked with a Corrective Action to address enrollment in special education. This started the conversation about addressing student needs prior to a student being evaluated. Our goal is to provide every student with the level of services they need. Mike Elliott asked why the state average has increased over the last several years. Dr. Farina stated that there has been an increase in certain disability categories, specifically OHI (Other Health Impaired). ADHD is a medical condition which has seen an increase in diagnoses in students and is a predominant reason for an OHI disability. There has also been an increase in mental health needs both statewide and within the district.

There was a further discussion about the district's decrease and the state's increase and if that discrepancy was due to under identifying. It was explained that when the district's percentage was higher than the state's, the reasons were due to providing more services than needed (ex. A student with a Speech and Language disability receives supplemental learning support services which exceeds the student's LRE), liberally qualifying for special education, and student's not exiting even though goals were met. The district has also implemented many additional intervention services, including learning and mental health, so at the beginning of the student's academic career, we are able to address those needs prior to evaluation. We have reading and math specialists, a behavior specialist, and counselors to assist classroom teachers to meet the needs of the students which has decreased the need for special education services. Students who are eligible have been provided all the supports but still require additional support due to a disability. One area the district is continuing to work on is the exiting of students from

special education. As special education students, particularly in high school, progress through their goals, there may be a need for a re-evaluation with testing and assessments, to determine if there continues to be a need for special education services. Based upon a re-evaluation, there may be evidence that accommodations are still necessary but they can be addressed through a 504 plan.

Indicator 1 (Graduation Rate) data is a comparison between the percentage of students who graduate from the high school in the 4 year cohort with the percentage of special education students who graduate from the high school in the 4 year cohort. Graduation rates in special education are impacted by disability categories. Typically, students identified as Intellectually Disabled (ID) will remain in school until age 21 and will not graduate in the 4 year cohort. Other disability categories also see students remaining and graduating in the 5 or 6 year cohort.

Indicator 5 (Educational Environment (LRE) data compares the Upper Perk special education LRE with the state average LRE. The data looks to see if the district is on par with students being in general education classes 80% or more each day, less than 40% each day, and in other settings (out of district). LRE is a determination of data collection on goals, recommended services, student supports, information gathered during re-evaluation assessments and input from IEP team members. Students are in alternative educational settings because the district is unable to provide the level of services needed to meet the student's needs. The determining factors of LRE for our in-district students is used to determine LRE for our alternatively placed students, with the goal being to have students return to district. Additionally, there are larger districts that provide additional in district programming (MDS K-12, Life Skills K-12, Emotional Support K-12, etc), which can impact the number of students attending out of district programming.

Indicator 8 (School Facilitated Parent Involvement) looks at the district provided parent and community trainings each year. Trainings are scheduled once each quarter and topics have included transition, mental health, the IEP, grandparents raising grandchildren, executive functioning, etc.

Indicator 13 (Transition and Post School Outcomes) is monitored by the state every 5 years. The survey looks at special education students ages 16-21 and their post-graduation goals. The special education teacher will go through the questions with their students. We work with the IU to look at our IEPs and be sure that the transition sections are top notch and all areas are being addressed.

Indicator 14 (Post-School Outcomes) occurs the year following a student's graduation. The data is information about what the student did that year after graduation. Comparisons are made between the data in Indicator 13 and the new data collected in Indicator 14. This data helps assist the district with programming.

High School Work Program was addressed by Shane Thrush. Students in the work program have the opportunity to acquire and practice skills at Last Chance Ranch, Logan's Heroes, Proper Restaurant, Liberty Thrift, Pennsburg Thrift, Boyertown Multi-Service, All Balls Racing, Inc, UPSD Mail Run, UPSD jobs (Ed. Center/schools). Students go to sites with Job Coaches and some work is brought back to the High School to be completed. Students in MDS, Life Skills and Autistic Support participate. In providing a variety of experiences, students learn what they like to do and what they prefer not to do. They are exposed to different bosses and managers and learn how to navigate work relationships.

UPSD has provided professional development that includes: PATTAN Autism Initiative for the low incident programs, Aimsweb Plus training for data collection and progress monitoring, a system of supports for behavior intervention which includes special education teachers, counselors, behavior specialist and RBTs to understand and develop an FBA, co-teaching at the secondary level for learning support/general education teachers, secondary transition of the IEP and compliance, group and one to one meetings at each building to discuss processes, procedures, teacher specific questions/issues and updates.

ESY 2021 will be different this year due to the pandemic. An additional week has been added as well as an additional hour each day of ESY. There will also be a 3 week summer reading and math program for students in special and non-special education students.

Information was shared about the Compliance Monitoring that occurred in 2019. There were 11 areas that required action and all were addressed through PD and student file reviews with BSE. There is an Improvement Plan with LRE and Dropout Rates which is ongoing through 2022 with follow up meetings with BSE. Our Special Education Plan is due March 1, 2021 and is completed with the Comprehensive Plan.

The MTSS discussion will occur at the next meeting. Mike Elliott expressed his gratitude to everyone working in the district. Motion to adjourn made by Mike Elliott and seconded by Dr. Drake.