

Stratham Memorial School Special Education Report

At Stratham Memorial School, we continue to provide special education services to students with educational disabilities in accordance with both federal and state laws. The federal law and the *NH Rules for the Education of Children with Disabilities*, mandate that students from 3-21 years of age with “educational” disabilities receive a free, appropriate, public education, in the least restrictive environment in which their Individual Education Program can be implemented.

In June, 2005, the United States Department of Education issued their proposed changes to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 special education regulations that were published by the Federal Registrar. Although IDEA ‘04 went into effect on July 1, 2005, hearings have been held to seek public comment, and written comments and suggestions were received through September 6, 2005. New Hampshire has also been working on comparing the proposed federal regulations with the *NH Rules for the Education of Students with Disabilities* via a Joint Committee of stakeholders. Changes being reviewed include definitions, teacher and paraprofessional qualifications, discipline and school safety, accountability, IEP content and process, and dispute resolutions procedures. This review process will be ongoing during the next several months before it is finalized.

Under IDEA 2004 there continues to be thirteen categories of educational disabilities that could qualify a child to receive special education services. Eligibility for services is the decision of the evaluation team, a group comprised of certified evaluators, the child’s teacher, and the child’s parents. Stratham Memorial School stresses the importance of gathering curriculum based data as well as standardized information from all team members so that participants can gain insight into each referred child’s learning style, abilities, and needs. Each child’s response to instructional interventions is also considered by the team. At this time, the school is providing special education supports to approximately 11% of the children enrolled at SMS.

The Special Education staff works collaboratively with teachers and related arts staff to enhance learning opportunities for all students. Many children also benefit from our specialists by participating in therapeutic groups offered in the classrooms. We continue to review research based programs to ensure that students receive effective, specialized instruction that matches their learning styles and needs. In addition, efforts to gather data regarding student progress are ongoing. This is achieved through the use of standardized tests, curriculum-based assessments, running records, checklists, and/or classroom observations.

Collaborating with parents to promote an effective special education team process for each child continues to be our priority. During the 04-05 school year, we held 256 team meetings with parents to discuss each child’s eligibility for services, individual program needs, placement, and progress. Numerous informal conversations also occur regularly to build home/school partnerships. We welcome parental participation in this process as we work together to improve each student’s learning and competence in the school setting.

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