

## Student, Stakeholder, and Market Focus

3.0 Student and Stakeholder Focus links closely with 2.0 Strategic Planning, 4.0 Information and Analysis, and 7.0 Results. All quality improvement efforts for Special Education begin and end with knowledge of customer needs. First, stakeholder requirements are learned. This knowledge provides input to the planning process.

### 3. 1 Student, Stakeholder, and Market Knowledge

3. 1. a. (1) Special Education determines program design and delivery on the basis of knowledge of the student segments. Data is gathered by conducting annual case conferences held at the student's home school or placement site. Information from case conferences is reviewed to identify increases or decreases of students within the various disability categories. In the spring, senior leadership begins to look at projected numbers of students entering elementary school from early childhood programs and other transitions, including elementary to middle school and middle school to high school.

Special Education provides services to students (ages 3-21) with disabilities as identified in Article 7.

3. 1.a. (2) Special Education incorporates several activities within its strategic planning process designed to assess student needs and expectations. To that end, during the past year, Special Education has revised a continuous improvement document based on input from stakeholders and an analysis of data.

Special Education's methods for listening and learning to determine students' general and special needs for special education include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### **Prior to entry into special education**

##### Child Find activity:

Announcements in the local newspaper promote the awareness of disabilities, programs and

services provided to any child who is suspected of having a disability.

##### Transition planning with local infant and toddler programs:

Conferences are held with local providers for infant/toddler programs (i.e. Thrive Alliance, formerly *First Steps*, etc.) prior to the child reaching the age of three years old. Participants include the local provider, any related services personnel providing services to the child, the parents, and local school officials. This process ensures a smooth transition into the Special Education Early Childhood Program. This program includes services at local schools, local preschools, or the home.

#### **During school years (ages 3-21 or until high school completion)**

##### Information from parents:

Parents know their children better than anyone. When they suspect that their child is having learning difficulties they are encouraged to talk to their child's teacher about concerns they have. Parents and teachers can then work together to develop intervention strategies. Parents may also make a referral for an educational evaluation at any time.

##### Teacher Problem Solving Process:

Each BCSC school has an Instructional Consultation Team (ICT). ICT is a process that utilizes a research based, collaborative problem solving approach that assists staff in identifying interventions that are an instructional match for the student. Beginning in the 2013 school year, ICT Facilitators have been changed to UDL Facilitators. UDL Facilitators continue to train IC Teams, while also working with classroom teachers to provide support while implementing the UDL framework into the classroom environment.

**Comments about ICT:**

***“The collaboration and student snapshot assessments between the teacher and case manager allows the teacher time to observe what a student can do and time to process what he or she observes. What has been even more amazing is how the classroom teacher uses the strategies suggested for one student, to reach his or her goal to improve reading, with the entire class!”***

***“What I love about ICT that is so different from what we have done in the past is that it really allows the referring teacher time to process and reflect on what the student can do and really pinpoint the problem from there. I really also think that this process allows more follow through with the entire process because of that one-on-one interaction with teacher and case manager.”***

Educational assessments:

This method of listening and learning involves a multi-disciplinary approach to determining whether a student has a disability, and to measure present and expected levels of performance. Information is gathered from parents, who provide a detailed account of their child’s social and developmental history, general educators, who describe the student’s performance in the classroom, special educators, who observe the student and identify the student’s strengths and areas for improvement in his performance, and school psychologists, who administer appropriate cognitive and achievement assessments. These assessments may include academic measurements of achievement, intelligence tests, social and behavioral rating scales, medical information, and other educationally related information.

Case conferences:

This method of listening and learning gathers all the participants in the child’s educational program, including parents, and the child when appropriate, for the purpose of describing the student’s educational performance, reviewing data which has been attained, and making a collaborative plan. The plan is documented in the form of an Individualized Educational Plan and includes, but it not limited to the student’s present level of

performance, annual goals and objectives, activities and services that are designed to improve the child’s skills, and appropriate accommodations and modifications. This process is required by law to be repeated annually, but can occur more frequently if necessary.

Progress reports:

Progress reports are a method of reporting progress on IEP goals to parents. They are sent every grading period at a minimum, and are in addition to the child’s report card.

Parent Advisory Council (PAC):

A Special Education Parent Advisory Council meets monthly with leadership from Special Education to identify needs, serve as a communication link with other parents, provide insights into important developments, and develop training sessions such as the UDL Forum. This is an important process that allows special educators to listen and learn from stakeholders.

Surveys:

Parent surveys are usually conducted every other year as a method to listen and learn from stakeholders. Information learned from these surveys is compiled at the district office and used to design program and service improvements, curriculum changes, and inservice activities.

Complaint process:

This method for listening and learning is available in each school. The process allows stakeholders a method for expressing their views. Complaints are first addressed at the local building level, but may proceed through a series of due process procedures including mediation and hearing.

<p><b>Parent Comment:</b></p> <p><i>“The BCSC staff who worked with my child were very patient and dedicated. They kept in contact with me and worked with me to show me things I could do at home to help. In my eyes these people are heroes, true heroes.”</i></p>
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## Preparation for exiting the school system

### Transition Event:

This method of listening and learning involves the gathering of multi-agency, post-secondary personnel to present information and answer questions from parents and students as they prepare to exit high school. The annual transition event is organized by the local Bartholomew County Transition Council and held at the Columbus Learning Center. The event is designed to present information to students and parents in a mini-conference format which includes rotating concurrent sessions on topics essential to students' transitions from high school to adulthood. In addition, students have the opportunity to visit with 35+ vendors representing agencies, organizations, and services they may want to access. Students are provided lunch at the event. A keynote speaker provides inspiration and motivation to students to achieve their dreams in life. A parent session is also held during the lunch hour.

### ***Student Comments from the 2012 Transition Event:***

*"It was great learning about new options after school"*

*"I enjoyed the speaker because it made me realize I can do anything."*

### Transition Council:

This interagency council includes 18 representatives from parents and families, adult service agencies, Ivy Tech, Columbus East, Columbus North, and Hauser High Schools. The council collaborates to address issues essential to students' transitions from high school to adult life (i.e. employment, post-secondary, residential, funding, and recreation). The council meets once a month and is responsible for coordinating the annual transition event.

## Input from teachers

3. 1. a. (3) Special Education ensures up-to-date knowledge about student and stakeholder needs and expectations from information gathered during annual case reviews. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are prepared collaboratively with input from students, parents, teachers (both general education and special education), administrators, and other community stakeholders. Senior leadership also gathers information during school visits and from parents during PAC meetings and phone calls. As a result of the growing number of students with Autism, the Autism Coordinator emails daily instructional strategies for students with Autism to all BCSC staff during April, Autism Awareness Month.

3. 1. a. (4) Special Education employs many of the same strategies already discussed to ensure that the special education leadership is aware of stakeholders' changing needs. Information from the IEP and various surveying techniques is used on a regular schedule to gather information from past, present, and future stakeholders.

In the fall, senior leadership meets with the BCSC's Director of ESL to talk about the growing number of students who are learning to speak English and also qualify for special education services. BCSC contracts with Indiana University's Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences to conduct speech evaluations for students who are native Spanish speakers. Based on stakeholder input and data about the growth of this population in our community, it was determined that such a need existed in BCSC.

### **3. 2. a Student and Stakeholder Relationship Building**

3. 2. a. (1) Special Education strives to maintain frequent communication (formal and informal methods) with all stakeholders, especially when it has positive news to report or when it notes a problem developing. To strengthen the communication with stakeholders, they have access to a special services website. The website is updated on a regular basis with current information, events, and related links.

Figure 3.2

Opportunities to Enhance Stakeholder Relationships

Daily/Weekly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Telephones with voice mail</li> <li>• Open Door Policy</li> <li>• Websites (Special Services, School, and Teacher)</li> <li>• Assignment Notebooks and other written communication</li> </ul>
Monthly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals' Meetings</li> <li>• School Board Meetings</li> <li>• PTO Meetings</li> <li>• Instructional Consultation Teams</li> <li>• Parent Advisory Council (PAC)</li> <li>• CIC Meetings</li> <li>• Transition Council</li> <li>• Leadership Meetings</li> <li>• Support Groups</li> </ul>
Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent/Teacher Conferences</li> <li>• Open Houses</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Parent Forums</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Special Events (UDL Forum)</li> <li>• Case Conference/Annual Case Reviews</li> </ul>

3. 2. a. (2) Special Education has developed a number of stakeholder-driven (designed on the basis of specific needs of students/parents) partnerships. It is important that special education anticipate the expectations of the next-level customers. One example is the Transition Event. The Transition Event is an annual collaborative effort between North and East high schools to gather multi-agency post-secondary personnel to present information and answer questions from parents and students preparing to exit high school. Participating partners include: Vocational Rehabilitation, DSI, IUPUI, Workforce Development, Indiana Business College, Community Employment Options, Ivy Tech, Business Empowerment Team Resource, Indiana Transition Initiative, Institute for the Study of Developmental Disabilities, PACE, Reunion Family Associates, The Arc of Bartholomew

County, Indiana Protection/Advocacy, CRF Community Residential, Social Security, Agency for Aging, IUPUC, Volunteers in Medicine, Behavioral Healthcare, Bureau of Developmental Disabilities, Stone Belt, and others. Another example of inter-agency partnerships is the collaborative effort between high school classes and Project Connect. The purpose of the partnership is to provide support for high school efforts to build vocational and academic skills. Vocational Rehabilitation actively works with juniors and seniors who will need support after they finish high school as they prepare for the transition from high school. A Vocational Rehabilitation counselor attends annual case reviews and transition case conferences to assist in the preparation of transitioning plans.

One important way Special Education develops partnerships with stakeholders is through the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The PAC has a highly visible role in the program, and senior leaders work with PAC to meet identified needs. The PAC also serves a communication function. Information from PAC meetings is included in school newsletters. Issues are passed from the PAC to the senior leaders of Special Education. Senior leaders attend PAC meetings, provide insight into important developments, and answer questions that arise. Special Education is further strengthening the parent partnership by having a parent as a member of the Continuous Improvement Council (CIC). A business leader also serves on the CIC.

3. 2. a. (3) The Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation Complaint Process is provided by law to parents and students. The BCSC complaint process allows stakeholders a method for expressing views. BCSC complaints are first addressed at the local building level but may proceed through a series of due process procedures including mediation and hearings. Although Special Education strives to have zero complaints, it has not achieved that standard of performance. Rather than view complaints as a threat, Special Education mines the information available when complaints are registered in an effort to learn and improve. Special Education follows the continuous quality improvement philosophy and resists blaming others for misunderstandings. Parent complaints do occur. Staff members are expected to identify the causes of stakeholder dissatisfaction without offering excuses

for poor performance. Two messages are delivered: “We understand you are upset” and “What do we need to know and do to ensure the cause of the problem is removed?”

3. 2. a. (4) Special Education ensures that the practices utilized are current by continually listening to the stakeholders via formal and informal means which are scheduled as part of the Strategic Planning Process.

### **3. 2. b Student and Stakeholder Satisfaction Determination**

3. 2. b. (1) Special Education has implemented several processes that regularly and systematically determine student and stakeholder satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Administered surveys ensure coverage of all stakeholder quality satisfaction attributes (friendliness, competency, access, etc.) and ensure objectivity and reliability of results. Differences in methods of measurement reflect the issues and concerns of the various stakeholder groups, but all incorporate elements of the vision and aims in the questions asked. Measures of stakeholder satisfaction include:

- Number of formal complaints registered with staff, parents, and administration
- Percentage of parents reporting high satisfaction levels on periodic surveys

Strengths and opportunities for improvement are regularly identified by the CIMS indicators. We try to maintain up-to-date approaches to satisfaction determination while ensuring continuity from year to year for comparison purposes. Selected stakeholders are consulted to ensure that our systems, procedures, and tools cover the most important areas and to assess the ease of use of forms and surveys. The CIC (consisting of staff and stakeholders) use the data gained through surveying activities as input to the Plan, Do, Check, Improve (PDCI) process. Information is also gathered from the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), principal meetings, the administrative council meetings, senior leadership meetings, and community meetings. All

data is shared with senior leadership for inclusion in strategic planning.

3. 2. b. (2) As indicated previously, the Complaint Management Process has established standards for prompt and timely feedback regarding steps special education will take to investigate and to resolve complaints. The surveys also ask stakeholders to tell what future requirements are anticipated so the cooperative can design new processes or programs in a way that meets stakeholders’ expectations.

3. 2. b. (3) Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation Special Education completes a yearly CIMS report (as indicated previously). In the spring of 2009, Special Education Leadership asked other districts in the state to see if anyone conducts stakeholder satisfaction surveys. Of the thirteen districts that responded, only one stated that they conduct stakeholder satisfaction surveys.

3. 2. b. (4) All methods and processes are kept current through deployment of the PDCI cycle. This ensures alignment of all surveying activities with the evolving list of aims and goals for Special Education.