

**SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

SPECIAL EDUCATION REPORT

November 2005

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*A special thank you for the
commitment and time to the members of the
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SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPECIAL EDUCATION REVIEW

I. Introduction

As part of ongoing initiatives designed to attain continuous improvement in the District's special education programs and services, the South Orangetown Central School District (SOCSD) engages in ongoing K-12 program evaluations. It is our goal to assure that resources are allocated in the most cost effective and student effective methods possible. A Special Education Task Force was convened this past year as part of the district's cycle of program review.

The SOCSD Mission Statement reflects,

“In a rapidly changing world, the South Orangetown school community affirms its positive vision of the future by providing a safe and caring environment where the excitement of teaching and learning is shared by all, and where we encourage and nurture the uniqueness of each child. Through diverse and challenging programs, we promote high academic standards, creative and critical thinking, self-respect and respect for others, and acceptance of our responsibilities in a global society. We are committed to fostering a love of learning in our students.”

The Special Education Task Force developed and focused its energies upon the following significant and emerging essential question: “How well are we meeting the needs of our special education students so that they meet with success?”

This task force developed a representative group of all stake holders affiliated with special education students. A collaboration between Dr. Jane Sandbank, Deputy Superintendent and Mrs. Michele Fenster, Director of Special Education and Student Services coordinated and facilitated the work. Representative volunteers were requested from EASO, PTA, administration and students. This resulted in a very eclectic and appropriate Special Education Task Force. Members included administrators, regular education teachers, special education teachers, parents, psychologists, advocates, CSE chairpersons and team leaders - a true representation of K-12 special education stakeholders.

The Task Force convened meetings on five different dates. An online electronic survey on the SOCSD website was developed for teaching staff and parents. In addition, hard copy surveys were also available to respondents who were unable to access the website or had multiple classified students. Focus groups were coordinated for staff, students, student alumni, as well as, daytime and evening options for parents.

Additionally, the Task Force reviewed the Reauthorization of IDEA, NYS guidelines and regulations, student performance data, the District's three year plan for Special Education, Program Evaluation Model, Action Research Model, survey drafts and relevant articles from the professional literature and current research in the field. Discussions were held with the goal of achieving better understanding of how to utilize quantitative, qualitative and comparative data

(e.g., standardized test scores, declassification information, graduation and exit information, ethnicity and race, in-district and out-placed information, programs and services, staffing, and current research on best practice and cost benefits analysis) in furthering the Task Force’s mission of improving the ways in which the District meets the needs of its educationally disabled population.

The SOCSO is committed to educating students with disabilities within its own schools, whenever appropriate. The Committee on Special Education shall recommend programs and/or services, which provide for a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) based on the individual learning needs of the student within the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). This commitment is exhibited in our integrated co-teaching programs. SOCSO is a model district for many neighboring districts in their review of inclusion models. The feedback from colleagues in other districts is extremely complimentary and impressive after visiting our programs. In addition, all of our school age students with disabilities are provided the opportunity to participate in the curricular and extracurricular programs of the District.

At this time, it is important to take the opportunity to thank each and every member of the Special Education Task Force. Your time and much appreciated participation have helped to bring us to this point. Your voice has been valued and is respectfully acknowledged. It is our hope that together we can continue to move forward in always looking to improve our programs and services as we support the children of the South Orangetown community.

II. Executive Summary

The Task Force recognizes the right of every child with educational disabilities to receive an appropriate education within the least restrictive environment. The student data reviewed with the committee was compiled from a report to New York State as of December 1, 2004. At that time, there were a total of 440 students with disabilities residing in the South Orangetown community. A total of 370 students were in our regular schools, 64 students were in other public schools, 5 students were in private schools and 1 student was being educated in a home/hospital setting. There are thirteen classifications for eligibility of special education services. The following representation of the South Orangetown Community as of December 1, 2004 is as follows:

Autism	27 students
Emotional Disturbance	38 students
Learning Disability	173 students
Mental Retardation	3 students
Deafness	1 student
Hearing Impairment	3 students
Speech or Language Impairment	99 students
Visual Impairment	2 students
Orthopedic Impairment	1 student
Other Health Impairment	65 students
Multiple Disabilities	26 students
Deaf Blindness	0 students
Traumatic Brain Injury	2 students
Total.....	440 students

With the ongoing scheduling of Committee on Special Education meetings, as of September 7, 2005, the number of students classified in the South Orangetown School Community has increased to 451 students. This number is always changing due to the needs of our students.

III. Special Education Program Description

The district provides a full range of programs and services designed to help each student achieve his/her IEP goals. The district will also continue to evaluate every aspect of our program and to monitor closely the progress of each of our students, with a view toward ensuring that the needs of each student are being appropriately met as defined in law and regulation. The Office of Special Education is committed to developing programs that will enable students to remain in our school buildings whenever possible. Additionally, we review the education of our out-of-district students to examine the efficacy of their return to their home schools and ability to attend programs within our school community. At the same time, we will offer an array of programs and services to all students with disabilities in and out of district to appropriately accommodate their educational needs. Over the last three years, new programs have been developed and existing programs have been restructured to meet student needs such as Keys for Educational Achievement in SOMS.

The district provides a continuum of programs and services as follows. See appendix C for glossary and description of terms.

- a) Declassification Support Services – All Grades
- b) Related Services – All Grades include, but are not limited, to speech pathology, audiology, psychological services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, counseling services, parent counseling and training, school health services.
- c) Consultant Teacher Services: minimum two hours weekly
- d) Resource Room Services (HS) (Pilot Program at TZE)
- e) Support Skills Services (MS)
- f) Co-Teaching – All Grade Levels
- g) Center-Based / Special Classes
- h) Special Class Intensive Models (MS/HS)
- i) Cove Program (MS/HS)
- j) TSP (Therapeutic Support Program) (MS)
- k) KEA (Keys for Educational Achievement) (MS)
- l) Home/Hospital Instruction

When making out-of-district program recommendations, the CSE must consider BOCES and the other public school settings as a first priority in the continuum of services. The next recommendation is approved private school placements. Over the last three years, the number of such approved private out-of-district placements has decreased significantly in the spirit of least restrictive environment. A review indicates that, in 2002-03, 16 students were placed in private school settings; in 2003-04, 11. As of this date, only 6 students are placed in private school settings. The majority of students placed out-of-district were in BOCES or other Public Schools as preferred by NYS regulations. This is attributable to a total review of our out-of-district students and appropriate ways of meeting their needs. Students were placed in 24 different school locations to address their individual needs. It is the responsibility of the Office of Special Education and the CSE to maintain their knowledge base of all available school placement options to help to support our students' needs with an appropriate public education.

It is imperative that methods are established to evaluate the program objectives and student growth. Several areas have been coordinated to ensure this is achieved. An Annual Review process is established; periodic review of standardized and achievement test results in combination with NYS and local assessments; reevaluation (every 3 years) to gather data regarding academic, and social/emotional growth; formal and informal review from parents, community members and students and post secondary assessments and educational and vocational outcomes.

Professional growth continues to be a valuable part of the answer. Formal and informal observations and Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process of Special Education staff is coordinated with the Director of Special Education. In addition, staff development in various workshops throughout the year both in and out of district for professional growth is evident. A collaboration with outside consultants, (e.g., Dr. Michelle Dunn and JoAnn Lense), to establish new programs that help address both the academic and social emotional needs of students are ongoing. In-depth training for staff, peer mentors and parent participation are also encouraged.

The program will continue to grow and develop materials, techniques and curriculum to support students with special needs in accordance with NYS Education Department guideline and graduation requirements.

A review of State assessments for the special education population was exemplary. The following results are evidence of students' success on mandated testing. (See Appendix A):

Math Assessment Grade 4

2004 69% of Special Education students scored Level 3 and 4
2005 76% of Special Education students scored Level 3 and 4

Math Assessment Grade 8

2004 59% of Special Education students scored Level 3 and 4
2005 30% of Special Education students scored Level 3 and 4

ELA Assessment Grade 4

2004 38% of Special Education students scored Level 3 & 4
2005 41% of Special Education students scored Level 3 & 4

ELA Assessment Grade 8

2004 35% of Special Education students scored Level 3 & 4
2005 30% of Special Education students scored Level 3 & 4

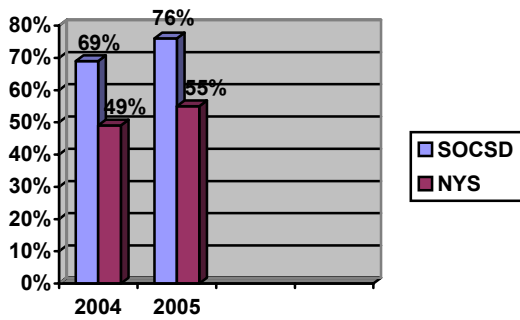
In assessments in Grades 4 and 8 in both math and ELA we significantly outperform the New York State performance for student with disabilities (see charts below).

Math 4 & 8, ELA 4 & 8 Results Students with Disabilities

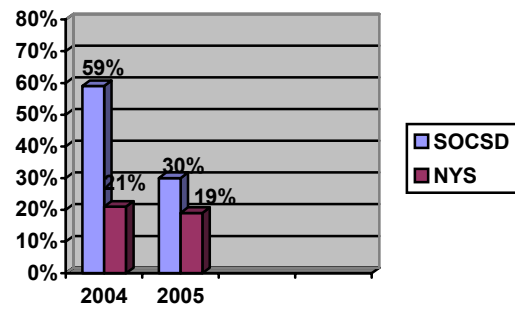
The following chart compares SOCSO scores for students with disabilities to NYS scores for students with disabilities:

% of students who scored at the Proficient or Advanced level

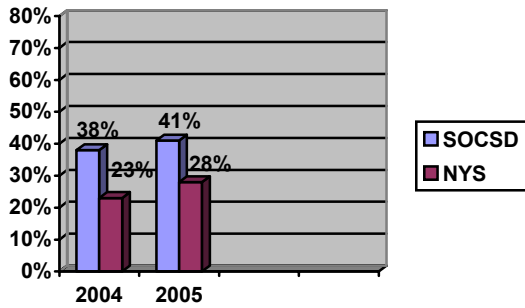
Math 4



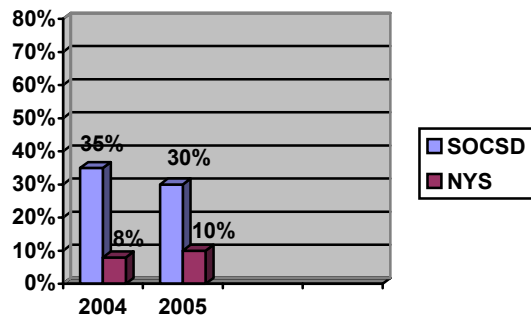
Math 8



ELA 4



ELA 8



In Grade 8 ELA in 2004 South Orangetown Central School District students with disabilities met or exceeded proficiency standards at over four times the rate of disabled students statewide. In 2005, we outperformed the state by 20%. In 2004, our students almost tripled the performance rate of students statewide.

Passing scores at the high school level are recorded below. The pattern of academic success as measured by Regents scores is evident based on this data:

Required Regents Exams 2005

Percentage of Special Education students passing

English	94%
Math A	86%
World History	75%
U.S. History	77%
Living Environment	90%
Earth Science	76%

In addition, the graduating class of 2005 had 27 Special Education Graduates. Students that proceeded to college equaled 96% of this cohort.

An additional area addressed by the Task Force is the Reauthorization of IDEA 2004. Most of this new Federal law became effective July 1, 2005. However, Federal regulations have yet to be enacted and New York State Regulations have only recently been adopted on an emergency basis. These emergency State regulations provide only limited guidance as to those actions that public school districts need to take in order to remain in compliance with State and Federal law regarding the manner in which the needs of its educationally disabled population must be met. We have been informed that they are planning on finalizing the Regulations by December 2005. At this time, we can make our best-informed decision on what the final regulations will look like.

We work closely and on an on-going basis with legal counsel to insure that all IDEA procedures and policies are in compliance. The following actions included in the legal counsel's review are:

- Review the District Plan developed in accordance with Section 200.2(c) of the Commissioner's Regulations;
- Review all relevant District policies and procedures, as set forth in the District policy book;
- Review all relevant forms used by the District's Office of Special Education;
- Attend at least one meeting of the Special Education Task Force;
- Schedule as many meetings as may be necessary with Michele Fenster to develop a complete understanding of the practices utilized by the District's Office of Special Education;
- Incorporate our overall knowledge of the District's Special Education programs and services derived from our day-to-day interaction with the District.

The partnership between the Special Education Department and legal counsel insures continued legal compliance.

IV. Analysis of Data/Findings

The design of this study, as indicated in the previous sections, was to provide a 360° wrap around evaluation. To that end, we looked for patterns of similarity in the responses from

teacher, parent and student focus groups, on-line surveys and longitudinal student result data. In addition, comments from our Special Education alumni were also part of this study.

Based on the student performance data that addresses our essential question, “How well are we meeting the needs of our Special Education students so that they meet with success?” the NYS Assessment reports for Grades 4 and 8 and the high school graduation information present compelling and strong statistically significant results that our continuum of services, courses, programs and especially our co-teach model, enable Special Education students to achieve success.

We have particularly strong results as indicated in the preceding table, in Grade 4 math with 76% of Special Education students achieving levels 3 & 4 (Levels 3 & 4 indicate proficiency and meeting and/or exceeding New York State Standards). Despite increasing numbers of Special Education students in Grade 4, 2004 and 2005, we have 69% and 76% respectively achieving proficiency. In Grade 8 Math, in the same years, we have 59% and 30% (See Appendix A). Although ELA results are not as strong, 38% in 2004 and 41% in 2005 for Grade 4, these are still impressive numbers. Grade 8 shows 35% in 2004 and 30% in 2005. Moreover, despite increasing Special Education students in these grades, numbers of students reaching proficiency continue to increase over the last 5 years.

Our high school data is even more impressive. 96% of Special Education graduates went on to college, with 59% attending 4-year colleges and 37% entering 2-year colleges.

74% of Special Education students earned a Regents diploma, and 37% earned an advanced Regents diploma. Special Education students did well on the English (94% passing), Math A (86% passing and 33% at Mastery) and Living Environment Regents (90% passing and 20% at Mastery) in 2005 (Mastery indicates 85% or better).

We are showing a trend of increased scores on assessments and closing the gap between regular education and special education student performance. We anticipate this trend will continue. The test data confirm other indications of student success.

Our parent, teacher and student focus group and on-line survey indicate tremendous support for the co-teach model.* Ninety-two percent of parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the integration of their students into the culture of the class and 80% were satisfied or highly satisfied with their children’s academic progress. The majority of parent focus group participants reported that they felt their children were making good academic progress. Parents also noted that they were satisfied with support during placement and the level of Special Education teacher effectiveness.

Teachers agreed that the co-teach model was an area of strength as was administrative support. Both parents and teachers agree that areas needing improvement, where there are higher levels of dissatisfaction, include professional development, the CSE process, and linking information from one building to another.

There is consistent agreement as to areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction across buildings and responses indicate that there was improvement in communication at the district level and for

* See Appendix B for detailed information on parent and teacher focus group data and on-line survey summaries.

out-of-district placement in recent years. In further analysis of areas of dissatisfaction, a cause seems to center around the degree of variability, or inconsistency in services dependent on an individual child's case. The recommendations address this concern as well as other areas of dissatisfaction. Even though there are high levels of satisfaction of students integrated in the classroom, concerns mention the need for better integration of the child into the larger school culture. So too, the feedback loop, especially reports to parents on student progress, indicate another area of dissatisfaction.

As strong as is the agreement on high levels of satisfaction for academics, constituents look to the area of social/emotional growth as an area needing improvement, especially at the middle school level. In many of the comments however, COVE was praised, as meeting academic, social and emotional needs of students.

Other areas that teachers commented on were the need for more time for collaboration, K-12 programs to support students between co-teach and center-based classes, and increased reading services to Special Education students. Preceding this report, interventions have already been put into place to address these concerns. Intensive classes have been established at both the middle school and high school.

Because our Special Education study coincided with our Tristate Review, it is noteworthy to include the specific comments concerning Special Education that are part of the Tristate Evaluation Report. As part of the K-12 results, the Tristate evaluations pointed out the following: "Evidence exists linking improved academic and social-emotional growth to Special Education programs and services." Additionally, in the category of equity and the opportunity to learn, a special strength that was noted is that almost all Special Education students are taught in co-taught inclusion classes. Another important Tristate indicator, "Building shared vision and goals," delineates yet another area of strength district-wide. Our co-teaching classes in subject areas for identified students are given support through the Special Education department.

Student comments generally reinforced teacher and parent comments. Students perceive resource room and co-teach class support to be effective, but there is some disagreement on service effectiveness based on individual students' experiences. Students also find testing accommodations helpful. Although only four alumni participated in a focus group, their comments are compelling and serve as one of the best indicators of program and services success. When students were asked how helpful the Special Education services were at Tappan Zee High School to prepare them for college, the following response reveals a great deal about the entire South Orangetown Special Education program and services:

"We feel that we received the foundation to move on to college. The special ed teachers were always motivating us to do our best and believe in ourselves. You do not have the same level of support in college but the high school teachers instilled values and refused to let us wander. We think of them often."

And a final alumni comment:

"We can't believe that we're saying this, but PUSH STUDENTS HARDER."

Based on discussions during Task Force meetings, we identified the need to review our 504 process and data on students. In addition, we need to address concerns of parents of students designated as 504 and clarify distinctions between the Special Education and 504 processes.

V. Recommendations

Based on the triangulation of all data (patterns that repeated regardless of source or format), and the findings described above, the following recommendations are made:

- STAFFING:
 - initiate the position of learning consultant at the middle and high school as exists in the elementary level.
 - create a full-time CSE chair position
- READING: Initiate a scientifically based reading program (Note: teacher training for such program, K-12, was begun this summer and continues this fall).
- CSE Communication/IEP Development:
 - develop a more standardized, better articulated K-12 CSE process
 - strengthen the *partnership* among all CSE members and build a more clearly focused K-12 process
 - advance communication of information within and across buildings, levels, departments and parents
 - insure a collaborative process, where outcomes are not previously decided
 - focus on effective use of time at CSE meeting to address issues
 - offer increased training of a skill set for all members of a CSE including parents, in order to develop consensus building
- 504
 - review 504 process with parents and building teams
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Continue to provide adequate time, experiences and structures for appropriate professional communication and to advance knowledge of best practice.
- COMMUNICATION:
 - increase parent communication through appropriate structures for workshops and information sharing, especially focused on the CSE process and IEP development.
 - develop a plan to improve communication between interdisciplinary team members.
- PROGRAM:
 - continue to review K-12 continuum of services to meet our student needs.

VI. Action Plan

As a result of the data analysis and Special Education Task Force study, certain steps have already been taken. Additional interventions based on the recommendations are in the planning stage for both the 2005-2006 year and 2006-2007.

Training in multi-sensory reading K-12 began over the summer and continues this fall and winter. These are three-day intensive workshops offered to Special and Regular Education teachers as well as other designated service providers.

Structures, both formal and informal, such as Special Education Coffee Chats to foster enhanced communication have been established as will a process for CSE and IEP review. All services and programs will continue to be evaluated, as will professional development offerings. We will increase our focus on social/emotional developmental issues as well as maintain our attention to increasing academic success and reviewing best practice and multiple measures.

Our goal is to insure programs and services that focus on continuous improvement and increased student success. We return to our essential question, “How well are we meeting the needs of our special education students so that they meet with success?”

While we acknowledge and celebrate impressive successes of our students, we recognize areas that are challenges and need focused attention so that all programs and services become stronger and more effective.

APPENDIX
A

SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Math Assessment
Grade 4**

Number of Students/Percent of Students in Performance Level

LEVEL	TOTAL POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	66	28%	122	58%	94	41%	123	55%	120	42%	167	64%
3	138	59%	79	37%	124	53%	95	42%	142	50%	87	33%
2	28	12%	10	5%	12	5%	6	3%	18	6%	5	2%
1	2	1%	1	0%	3	1%	0	0%	3	1%	1	0%
Total Students	234		212		233		224		283		260	

LEVEL	GENERAL EDUCATION POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	65	31%	116	59%	91	43%	121	58%	113	46%	160	68%
3	122	58%	74	38%	108	51%	83	40%	122	50%	75	32%
2	22	11%	6	3%	9	4%	3	1%	9	4%	0	0%
1	0	0%	1	1%	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total Students	209		197		210		207		244		235	

LEVEL	SPECIAL EDUCATION POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	1	4%	6	40%	3	13%	2	12%	7	18%	7	28%
3	16	64%	5	33%	16	70%	12	71%	20	51%	12	48%
2	6	24%	4	27%	3	13%	3	18%	9	23%	5	20%
1	2	8%	0	0%	1	4%	0	0%	3	8%	1	4%
Total Students	25		15		23		17		39		25	

SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**ELA Assessment
Grade 4**

Number of Students/Percent of Students in Performance Level

LEVEL	TOTAL POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	70	30%	83	39%	82	36%	97	44%	82	30%	98	38%
3	111	48%	106	50%	114	50%	96	44%	146	53%	127	49%
2	45	20%	21	10%	29	13%	24	11%	44	16%	30	12%
1	4	2%	2	1%	1	0%	2	1%	5	2%	4	2%
Total Students	230		212		226		219		277		259	

LEVEL	GENERAL EDUCATION POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	69	34%	81	41%	79	39%	95	47%	79	33%	97	42%
3	105	51%	98	50%	102	50%	89	44%	135	56%	117	50%
2	29	14%	16	8%	22	11%	17	8%	26	11%	18	8%
1	2	1%	1	1%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total Students	205		196		204		201		240		232	

LEVEL	SPECIAL EDUCATION POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	1	4%	2	13%	3	14%	2	11%	3	8%	1	4%
3	6	24%	8	50%	12	55%	7	39%	11	30%	10	37%
2	16	64%	5	31%	7	32%	7	39%	18	49%	12	44%
1	2	8%	1	6%	0	0%	2	11%	5	14%	4	15%
Total Students	25		16		22		18		37		27	

SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Math Assessment
Grade 8**

Number of Students/Percent of Students in Performance Level

LEVEL	TOTAL POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	36	16%	37	17%	47	20%	43	16%	73	27%	57	23%
3	111	51%	113	51%	130	57%	165	63%	154	57%	148	59%
2	59	27%	52	24%	40	17%	47	18%	38	14%	32	13%
1	16	6%	19	9%	15	7%	9	3%	6	2%	13	5%
Total Students	222		221		232		264		271		250	

LEVEL	GENERAL EDUCATION POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	36	19%	37	19%	47	22%	43	19%	72	30%	56	25%
3	107	56%	106	55%	122	58%	148	64%	136	57%	140	64%
2	44	23%	40	21%	33	16%	35	15%	30	13%	23	10%
1	4	2%	10	5%	9	4%	4	2%	1	0%	1	0%
Total Students	191		193		211		230		239		220	

LEVEL	SPECIAL EDUCATION POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	1	3%
3	4	13%	7	25%	8	38%	17	50%	18	56%	8	27%
2	15	48%	12	43%	7	33%	12	35%	8	25%	9	30%
1	12	39%	9	32%	6	29%	5	15%/	5	16%	12	40%
Total Students	31		28		21		34		32		30	

SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**ELA Assessment
Grade 8**

Number of Students/Percent of Students in Performance Level

LEVEL	TOTAL POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	48	22%	32	15%	39	17%	50	19%	42	16%	48	19%
3	91	42%	110	51%	127	55%	124	47%	147	55%	137	55%
2	68	31%	71	33%	63	28%	84	32%	76	28%	61	25%
1	13	6%	4	2%	1	0%	4	2%	2	1%	2	1%
Total Students	220		217		230		262		267		248	

LEVEL	GENERAL EDUCATION POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	48	25%	31	16%	39	18%	50	22%	40	17%	47	22%
3	88	47%	103	55%	122	58%	117	51%	138	58%	129	59%
2	50	26%	53	28%	49	23%	61	27%	58	25%	42	19%
1	3	2%	1	1%	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total Students	189		188		211		229		236		218	

LEVEL	SPECIAL EDUCATION POPULATION											
	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
4	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%	1	3%
3	3	9%	7	24%	5	26%	7	21%	9	29%	8	27%
2	18	59%	18	62%	14	74%	23	70%	18	58%	19	63%
1	10	31%	3	10%	0	0%	3	9%	2	6%	2	7%
Total Students	31		29		19		33		31		30	

APPENDIX
B

SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPECIAL EDUCATION ON-LINE SURVEY
Data from Teacher Questionnaires and Comments
April, 2005

Essential Question: How well are we meeting the needs of Special Education students so that they meet with success?

Respondents: 213 teachers or 71% of faculty (regular and special ed, guidance, psychologists)
Note: 57% of responders – regular ed teachers; 40% of teachers represent TZHS

Percentages of Levels of Agreement

Highest levels of agreement (combined strongly agree and agree):

- Supportive parents (88%)
- Opportunities to communicate with parents (85%)
- Students are progressing academically (80%)
- Parents are satisfied with services from teachers (86%)
- Sufficient training (81%)
- Administrative Support (80%)

Percentages of Levels of Disagreement

Highest levels of disagreement (combined disagree and strongly disagree):

- Students are receiving more services than necessary (74%)
- There are sufficient opportunities to collaborate with colleagues (48%)
- I have too many students to teach effectively (48%)
- Effective articulation of curriculum/program/services (28%)
- Appropriate placement (25%)
- Continuum of services is adequate (29%)
- CSE process is effective (20%)

Teacher comments/suggestions:

Noteworthy areas of strength:

- Co-teach model
- Michele Fenster's expertise and support
- Administrative support

Teacher comments/suggestions:

Areas to address for improvement:

- SE teacher scheduling including additional time for collaboration
- Continuum of services, especially programs between co-teach and center-based
- Reading services to SE students
- Staffing
- Developing greater student capacity as independent learners
- Time to prepare for CSE/CSE process
- Student schedules/pull-outs
- Articulation within and between schools
- Use of TA's
- Professional development
- Better use of technology/software

SPECIAL EDUCATION ON-LINE SURVEY
Data from Parent Questionnaires and Comments
April, 2005

Essential Question: How well are we meeting the needs of Special Education students so that they meet with success?

Respondents: 74 on-line + 5 paper = 79 or 20% of 401 Special Education families: Total: 440 students

Percentages of Levels of Satisfaction

Highest levels of satisfaction (combined strongly agree and agree):

- Integrated into the culture of class (92%)*
- Academic progress (80%) – 40% strongly agree

Percentages of Levels of Dissatisfaction

Highest levels of dissatisfaction (combined disagree and strongly disagree):

- Appropriate environment (23%)
- Interventions (27%)
- Curriculum modifications (27%)
- Instruction effectiveness (21%)
- Professional Development (43%)*
- Articulation (34% class) (27% school)

Overall level of parent satisfaction: 67% high or moderate satisfaction
28% high or moderate dissatisfaction

Areas of satisfaction based on comments:

- Support during placement
- Student academic performance
- Staff working together (CL)
- Teacher effectiveness (SE)

Areas of dissatisfaction based on comments:

- Professional Development (SE and RE) *
- Options in-district between co-teach and center-based
- School-to-school articulation
- Information about services, placement
- CSE process
- Feedback, reports to parent on student progress; communication
- Timely responsiveness from SE department
- Frequency/consistency of services – speech and reading
- Need for more challenging work

**highest percentage*

SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPECIAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Teacher Focus Groups

April 4 and 11, 2005

Essential Question: How well are we meeting the needs of Special Education students so that they meet with success?

Number of Teacher Focus Group participants:	WOS: 30
	TZE: 25
	CL: 25
	SOMS: 70
	TZHS: <u>85</u>
Total:	165 participants

OVERALL SUMMARY OF COMMENTS BASED ON TEACHER FOCUS GROUPS

- Request for more collaborative time (scheduled and focused) for interdisciplinary team, special education, regular education, and teaching assistants to meet together
- Increased professional development and training for all staff in terms of all aspects (academic, social/emotional, management, physical) of better meeting needs of special education students.
- Increased communication between special education team and parent
- More scheduled time for collaborative planning (lesson, modifications, etc.)
- Overall benefits of co-teach inclusion model K-12
- Need to further examine and improve continuum of services, especially at elementary level so that all needs appropriately met
- Increased attention needed to social/emotional issues of special education students especially center-based, COVE, TSP, and transitions from different programs and to different buildings

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS:

Question #1: Discuss the effectiveness of working collaboratively with your students' interdisciplinary team (special education teacher, speech/language teacher, occupational therapist, physical therapist, psychologist, etc.)

- More time for collaboration needed with specialists (OT, PT, Psychologists, etc.)
- Adequate collaboration time for co-teachers
- More support needed for kindergarten evaluations
- Training/additional support staff needed: OT, Speech, Psychologists
- Better K to 1 communication needed re: students receiving services
- Lunch/prep time used for parent meetings before CSE's

- Scheduling conflicts, especially pull-outs
- Common team time needed
- More handwriting support needed
- “Specials” teachers need more information about students
- Co-teach collaborative model is highly effective
- Computer teacher – small group more effective
- Psychologist and OT roles are critically important and helpful to regular education teacher
- Co-teach planning time is effective
- Need planning time with TA
- Better use of team time
- E-mail is helpful communication tool
- Increase time and professional development for differentiating lessons
- Increase collaborative conferences between parent and interdisciplinary team
- TA information and direct work with student is valuable (social/emotional)
- More collaborative time with TA and teacher
- Set collaborative time, especially at CL
- Support staff needs to communicate directly and more with teacher
- Psychologist briefings, meetings, etc. are very helpful
- Information from specialist helpful to teacher
- Better communication needed between regular teacher and specialists
- More needs to be done to strengthen the regular/special education relationship in co-teach teams
- Increase understanding of need for special education modifications/accommodations
- Middle school – more contact time with special education student and guidance counselor
- Difficult to communicate with cross team/grade teachers/inter-building shared staff
- Minutes from team meetings are helpful
- Need list of special education students with case managers and accommodations
- More support needed in Foreign Language
- Small groups → positive

Question #2: How well are your special education students integrated into the entire school community?

- Well integrated
- High level of integration
- Better integration needed with center based classes (social/emotional) – all need to own ALL students
- Review interaction among students in less structured environments
- Parent need to communicate to children the need to respect all staff
- Need more sensitivity to “best practices” in approach to middle school student accommodations/modifications
- COVE, TSP, KEA need more integration into school community
- Examine integration/achievement of special education students in Foreign Language, Explore, PE, Health subjects without co-teacher
- More SOCIAL integration needed - clubs

Question #3: Discuss the progress you observe with special education students in the following areas: academic progress, social/emotional progress, management needs, and physical needs.

Academic Progress	Social/Emotional Progress	Management Needs	Physical Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need math support • need more phonics • improve continuum of services • more small group time needed • continue to provide professional development in differentiation • intensive classes are successful • special students less stigmatized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more psychologists needed (elementary) • need physical space for crisis intervention • Lunch: friendship groups • TA support • mainstreaming mentoring • “Secondary academic progress comes in second if emotional needs not addressed” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peer study buddy helps • teaching skills vs. management • important for students to learn how to advocate for self, seek out help, be proactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More training for PE in OT/adaptive • more OT • FM system effective

Question #4: Any additional comments in terms of what is or is not working for our special education students?

- Investigate pro’s and con’s of elementary unclassified plans
- Early elementary concerns: need for increased motor and speech services
- Parent involvement is critical
- Key is early intervention
- Reading support for special education students
- Continue dialogue as exemplified by focus groups
- Student-specific team conferences
- Time
- TA training
- Software effective and encourages independence

SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPECIAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Parent Focus Groups

April 19, 2005

Essential Question: How well are we meeting the needs of Special Education students so that they meet with success?

Number of Focus Group participants:	a.m. session	9 parents
	p.m. session	5 parents
	TOTAL	14 parents

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS:

Question #1: Discuss the effectiveness of working collaboratively with your students' interdisciplinary team (special education teacher, speech/language teacher, occupational therapist, physical therapist, psychologist, etc.)

1. Collaboration with interdisciplinary team
 - a. IEP to parent before CSE (paper copies)
 - b. Increase communication during transitions, especially declassification
 - c. Good communication between child's team and parent, especially elementary
 - d. Increased ability for teacher to customize modifications based on student needs
 - e. Need for greater communication with parent at secondary level
 - f. Ensure IEP being followed
 - g. Improvement at district level and out-of-district placement in recent years
 - h. High dissatisfaction with CSE process and student placement and services
 - i. Lack of collaboration
 - j. District evaluations have been problematic
 - k. High variability dependent on individual case
 - l. Improved services and responsiveness with SE department under Michele Fenster's leadership

Note: Significant discrepancy in parent response to services, buildings, CSE, administration based on individual; full spectrum of response from highly positive to strongly negative.

Question #2: How well are your special education students integrated into the entire school community?

2. Integration into school community
 - a. Need more programs/information to support integration (buddy programs, friendship club, pamphlet of services, playground monitoring for peer interactions, etc.)
 - b. Strong in elementary because of excellent and ongoing communication
 - c. Examine high school program in-district for out-of-district students
 - d. Need to increase sensitivity and awareness in whole building to needs of SE students

Question #3: Discuss the progress you observe with special education students in the following areas: academic progress, social/emotional progress, management needs, and physical needs.

3. Progress in academic, social/emotional, management and physical
 - a. Focus on organizational skills
 - b. Good academic progress
 - c. More focus on mainstream teacher and needs of SE student
 - d. Increase academic challenge
 - e. More social/emotional support especially SOMS
 - f. Learning Center at SOMS effective
 - g. Handwriting club effective
 - h. Increase services/programs – proactive support for social/emotional learning
 - i. Self-contained program needed at TZHS
 - j. High level of satisfaction expressed

Question #4: Any additional comments in terms of what is or is not working for our special education students?

4. Other
 - a. COVE works well
 - b. Review and give feedback on IEP goals
 - c. On-line homework, curriculum
 - d. Transition representative at CSE
 - e. PTA – great student events
 - f. Develop social events with out-of-district students
 - g. Increase programs for parent education
 - h. Concern addressed at the presence of administrators at focus groups

SOUTH ORANGETOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPECIAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Student Focus Groups

June 2005

Essential Question: How well are we meeting the needs of Special Education students so that they meet with success?

Number of Focus Group participants:	SOMS	36 students
	TZHS	30 students
	TOTAL	66 students

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS:

Question #1: Today, let's talk about what parts of your special education program are helpful to you.

1. Resource Room/Learning Center
 - a. Get homework done
 - b. Study with assistance
 - c. Study guides
 - d. Extended time on tests
 - e. Explanation of questions
 - f. Quiet focus area
 - g. Computer and textbook resources
 - h. Content area teachers
 - i. Study for tests
 - j. Constant monitoring
 - k. Kind, but firm assistance
 - l. Understand work better
 - m. Help with organization and time management
 - n. Quiet
 - o. Get help with difficult content in small group

2. Co-teach
 - a. Two teachers better than one
 - b. Assistance
 - c. Study guides/notes
 - d. Work at own pace
 - e. More attention
 - f. More support
 - g. Extra help sessions
 - h. Keep focus
 - i. Work explained, rephrased-clarification

3. Testing Accommodations
 - a. Quiet
 - b. Extended time to finish
 - c. Questions explained and read
 - d. Work at own pace
 - e. Less nervous, less anxiety

4. Speech/Language/Other Special Services
 - a. Reading help
 - b. Reinforces
 - c. Grammar, sentence structure
 - d. Supports course work

APPENDIX

C

Glossary and Description of Terms

CSE – Committee on Special Education means a multidisciplinary team established in accordance with the provisions of Section 4402 of the Education Law. The membership of each committee shall include, but not be limited to: parents; regular education teacher; special education teacher; school psychologist; a representative of the school district who is qualified to provide or supervise special education; individual able to interpret instructional implications of evaluation results; school physician; additional parent member; if appropriate, the student.

Declassification Support Services – If a student has been receiving special education services, but it is determined by the committee on special education that the student no longer needs special education services and can be placed in a regular educational program on a full-time basis, the recommendation shall: a) identify the declassification support services, if any to be provided to the student; and/or the student's teachers; and (b) indicate the projected date of initiation of such services, the frequency of provision of such services, and the duration of such services, provided that such services shall not continue for more than one year after the student enters the full-time regular education program.

Related Services – means developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a student with a disability and includes speech-language pathology, audiology services, psychological services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling services, orientation and mobility services, medical services as defined in this section, parent counseling and training, school health services, school social work, assistive technology services, other appropriate developmental or corrective support services, appropriate access to recreation and other appropriate support services.

Consultant Teacher Services – means direct and/or indirect services, provided to a student with a disability who attends regular education classes and/or to such student's regular education teachers. (1) Direct consultant teacher means specially designed individualized or group instruction provided by a certified special education teacher to a student with a disability to aid such student to benefit from the student's regular education classes. (2) Indirect consultant teacher services means consultation provided by a certified special education teacher to regular education teachers to assist them in adjusting the learning environment and/or modifying their instructional methods to meet the individual needs of a student with a disability who attends their classes.

Resource Room – means a special education program for a student with a disability registered in either a special class or regular class who is in need of specialized supplementary instruction in an individual or small group setting for a portion of the school day.

Co-Teaching – means a special class consisting of students with disabilities who have been grouped together because of similar individual needs for the purpose of being provided specially designed instruction. The students are integrated into a regular classroom with typical peers. The classroom will have a regular education teacher, as well as a special education teacher.

Center Based/Special Class – means a special class consisting of students with disabilities who have been grouped together because of similar needs for the purpose of being provided specially designed instruction. This is a non-integrated classroom setting. The classroom will have a special education teacher.

Special Class/Intensive Models – means a special class consisting of students with disabilities who have been grouped together because of similar needs for the purpose of being provided specially designed instruction in a specific subject area. These classes can be integrated or non/integrated environments.

COVE Program – this is a special class centerbase environment. The students have below average cognitive abilities. We have this program at both SOMS and TZHS. The TZHS program also has a vocational component for students to learn transitional skills for employment. This program represents a consortium for occupational and vocational education. It also accepts students from the other Rockland component school districts.

TSP – this program is located at SOMS representing our therapeutic support program for students in Grades 6,7, and 8. The students exhibit high to above average cognitive abilities. It is a special class/center base model that partners with the Rockland BOCES TSP program at South Orangetown Middle School. It incorporates a school psychologist as a component of the team to facilitate student support.

KEA – This program represents a special class/centerbase model at South Orangetown Middle School. Keys for Educational Achievement services students in Grades 6,7, and 8 that have average cognitive abilities but are struggling to succeed academically. These students with disabilities require specially designed instructions in a non-integrated setting.

Home/Hospital Instruction – means special education provided on an individual basis for a student with a disability confined to the home, hospital or other institution because of a disability.