



Scotts Valley Unified School District Special Education Review

July 2, 2007

Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer



CSIS California School Information Services

July 2 2007

Susan Silver, Ed.D., Superintendent
Scotts Valley Unified School District
4444 Scotts Valley Drive, Suite 5B
Scotts Valley, CA 95066

Dear Superintendent Silver:

In December 2006, the Scotts Valley Unified School District and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) entered into an agreement for a review of the district's special education and special education transportation programs. Specifically, the agreement asked FCMAT to perform the following work:

1. Conduct a review of the district's special education and special education transportation program and provide recommendations for changes and improvements, as necessary, to address the following questions:

Does the district provide additional services beyond those identified and required in the student IEPs?

Does the district's IEP process meet all legal requirements?

Does the district's method of delivery for all special education program and transportation services enable it to effectively meet the needs of students while being fiscally efficient?

What alternative for special education transportation may be available to meet student needs?

FCMAT visited the district March 27-29 to review data, interview employees and collect information. This report is the result of that effort. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you and we extend our thanks to all the staff of the Scotts Valley Unified School District.

Sincerely,

Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer

FCMAT

Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer

1300 17th Street - CITY CENTRE, Bakersfield, CA 93301-4533 • Telephone 661-636-4611 • Fax 661-636-4647
422 Petaluma Blvd North, Suite. C, Petaluma, CA 94952 • Telephone: 707-775-2850 • Fax: 707-775-2854 • www.fcmat.org
Administrative Agent: Larry E. Reider - Office of Kern County Superintendent of Schools

Table of Contents

Forewordiii

Introduction I

Executive Summary 3

Findings and Recommendations

Program Effectiveness and Efficiency 5

Transportation21

Appendices31

Foreword

FCMAT Background

The Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) was created by legislation in accordance with Assembly Bill 1200 in 1992 as a service to assist local educational agencies in complying with fiscal accountability standards.

AB 1200 was established from a need to ensure that local educational agencies throughout California were adequately prepared to meet and sustain their financial obligations. AB 1200 is also a statewide plan for county offices of education and school districts to work together on a local level to improve fiscal procedures and accountability standards. The legislation expanded the role of the county office in monitoring school districts under certain fiscal constraints to ensure these districts could meet their financial commitments on a multiyear basis. AB 2756 provides specific responsibilities to FCMAT with regard to districts that have received emergency state loans. These include comprehensive assessments in five major operational areas and periodic reports that identify the district’s progress on the improvement plans

Since 1992, FCMAT has been engaged to perform more than 600 reviews for local educational agencies, including school districts, county offices of education, charter schools and community colleges. Services range from fiscal crisis intervention to management review and assistance. FCMAT also provides professional development training. The Kern County Superintendent of Schools is the administrative agent for FCMAT. The agency is guided under the leadership of Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer, with funding derived through appropriations in the state budget and a modest fee schedule for charges to requesting agencies.

Total Number of Studies..... 637

Total Number of Districts in CA 982

● Management Assistance..... 603 (94.66%)

● Fiscal Crisis/Emergency 34 (5.34%)

Note: Some districts had multiple studies.

● Districts (7) that have received emergency loans from the state.

(Rev. 4/3/07)

Study Agreements by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year	Number of Studies
92/93	10
93/94	15
94/95	22
95/96	28
96/97	25
97/98	25
98/99	27
99/00	47
00/01	48
01/02	58
02/03	33
03/04	70
04/05	73
05/06	78
06/07	82 (Projected)

Scotts Valley Unified School District

Introduction

Background

The Scotts Valley Unified School District is located in the coastal mountains of northern Santa Cruz County and serves approximately 2,771 students from Scotts Valley and surrounding communities in grades K-12. The district consists of two elementary schools, one middle school, one high school and an independent study/home school for students in grades K-12. Enrollment has declined by 128 students since the 2004-05 school year.

Since the 2002-03 school year, the district's special education enrollment has risen from 234 to 244 students. Students with low incidence or severe disabilities are served in programs provided by the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, the Santa Cruz City Schools, the Soquel Union School District and nonpublic schools or agencies.

In December 2006, the district and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) entered into an agreement for a review of the district's special education services and programs, including transportation of special education students. As stated in the agreement, FCMAT agreed to address in its review the following scope points:

1. Conduct a review of the district's Special Education and Special Education Transportation program and provide recommendations for changes and improvements, as necessary, to address the following questions:
 - Does the district provide additional services beyond those identified and required in the student IEPs?
 - Does the district's IEP process meet all legal requirements?
 - Does the district's method of delivery for all special education program and transportation services enable it to effectively meet the needs of students while being fiscally efficient?
 - What alternative for special education transportation may be available to meet student needs?

Study Guidelines

FCMAT visited the district on March 27-29, 2007 to collect data, conduct interviews and review documentation. This report is a result of those activities and is divided into the following sections:

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Program Effectiveness and Efficiency
- III. Transportation
- IV. Appendices

Study Team

William Gillaspie, Ed.D.
FCMAT Management Analyst
Bakersfield, CA

John Lotze
FCMAT Public Information Specialist
Bakersfield, CA

William Puddy
FCMAT Consultant
Lincoln, CA

Dorothy Kay Atchison
FCMAT Consultant
Auburn, CA

Executive Summary

The Scotts Valley Unified School District is a small district and one of 13 local educational agencies (LEAs) that constitute the North Santa Cruz County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). The district developed its first strategic plan in 2006, and the document was adopted by the Governing Board. A supplemental plan (2007-08) has also been adopted. Numerous sections of the strategic plan require special education involvement. This FCMAT study is a response to, and is designed to support, the district's adopted strategic plan.

With strategic planning accomplished, the district should engage in strategic and collaborative discussions to improve the delivery of services to students and their families. It will be important to gather data from a variety of sources and validate the special education information included in the strategic plan.

The district's concerns regarding special education are common to many local educational agencies (LEAs) and include the following:

- Recruitment of special education staff.
- The high cost of some programs for preschool special education students.
- The effectiveness of infant and preschool programs for children with special needs.
- Nonpublic school (NPS) and nonpublic agency (NPA) placements.
- Due process.

The district should consider expanding its recruitment efforts and possibly revising salary levels through the negotiation process to help recruit and retain qualified personnel for the occupational therapist (OT) and speech and language therapist positions.

The district should consider developing exit criteria when appropriate for programs such as OT and speech and language to reduce costs and ensure that students who need these services receive the greatest possible benefit.

Autism is one of the fastest growing diagnosed learning disabilities in states across the nation, including California. Autism is not included in the category of low-incidence disabilities. The district's 21 autistic students range in age from four to 20 years and display a wide range of abilities and skills. As a result, it is a challenge to provide appropriate educational services to meet students' needs. The district faces several issues in serving these students, including the following:

- Selecting the appropriate assessments to determine the eligibility of a student who might have autism.

- Revising inconsistent guidelines regarding appropriate educational interventions and how they should be provided. The current guidelines can lead to expensive educational placements.
- Dealing with the overidentification of students who ostensibly suffer from autism when they actually may have mental retardation or be emotionally disturbed. At present, the district has provided clinical diagnosis for all but two students who may suffer from autism.

The district has recently created a position that meets the job specifications of a program specialist. The state provides SELPAs with specific funding that can be used only for providing regionalized services and regional program specialist services. The services of program specialist have not been available in North Santa Cruz County SELPA since the breakup of the Santa Cruz/San Benito SELPA. Several recent studies and task force reports have suggested reviewing the use of these funds. As the SELPA pursues these recommendations, the district might suggest that the SELPA consider either establishing a SELPA program specialist position or assisting the districts so that they can provide their own program specialist services.

The district has procedures to reduce transportation use and costs whenever possible by using pick-up points instead of providing door-to-door service. However, the district lacks a parent transportation handbook that outlines the emergency procedures to be followed for receiving students when parents are not at home or at the pick-up points. This type of handbook should be developed.

District-operated transportation serves two orthopedically impaired students at a cost that is higher per student than the state average. The district should consider contracting for services for these students and should continue its current discussions with transportation contractors to provide transportation services appropriate to the needs of the students at a lower cost. The option of allowing a contractor to use district facilities and hire local drivers should also continue to be considered.

The district transports special education students to and from sites both in and outside the district. Decreasing placements in out-of-district programs and serving students at a central district location whenever possible could reduce transportation costs and maintain services to students. These options should be considered.

The high cost of regional special day class preschool programs was discussed in a March 2005 study prepared by Caryl Miller for the Santa Cruz SELPA. This study recommended eliminating the special day class preschool programs because they are not regional or, if this option is not viable, capping the regional special day class preschool programs at a specific amount not to exceed the average of current costs. The district has placed a fiscal cap for mild-moderate disabilities. These options might still be considered, in consultation with the SELPA governing council.

Findings and Recommendations

Program Effectiveness and Efficiency

Collaboration, Communication and Planning

Effective special education programs depend on the collaboration of several departments such as special education, fiscal services, human resources and administration. Special education programs are complex and must operate within federal and state legal parameters. Students with special disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE), based on the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

IEPs are working educational plans that demonstrate student progress. Leaders in each department must understand the role and responsibility of special education to ensure that its programs are effectively staffed and funded. The special education staff must understand budgets and other fiscal reporting so that they can provide fiscal data and monitor revenues, expenditures and budgets throughout the year.

Because special education funding consists of federal funds, state dollars and local support which must be reported and budgeted, it is imperative that all departments work together and that all staff are knowledgeable about other departments' responsibilities. Departments and staff need to collaborate and communicate to ensure that programs operate efficiently. The superintendent should encourage and be included in this communication.

Specific time must be regularly allocated for networking, sharing information and building trust. Each administrator is responsible for sharing important information with colleagues to help others grow professionally and to improve the district's efficiency.

There appear to be varying levels of communication among the district office, schools, the SELPA, the county office and parents. In the district office, continual and effective communication regarding special education can be improved. Collaborative environments would provide a more satisfying and productive work environment, and small school districts such as Scotts Valley have the opportunity to empower staff to create a positive school culture.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider holding weekly meetings that could focus on topics such as personnel, budgets, potential due process proceedings, placement of students in NPS/NPA settings, and other items.

These meetings should be attended by the superintendent, assistant superintendent of educational services (who oversees special education), chief business official (CBO), director of business services, and administrator of human resources.

2. Consider the special education department's response to the strategic plan as follows:
 - Redefine the role and responsibility of the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services position. The Superintendent is in the process of redefining the curriculum and instruction position along with clarifying the role of the Special Education Director.
 - Support the creation of a culture committed to working with colleagues and families.
 - Continue implementing the policy of continual improvement of all special education programs and services.

Occupational & Speech and Language Therapy Services & Caseloads

School districts nationwide find it extremely difficult to hire and maintain special education personnel such as speech and language therapists, occupational and physical therapists, teachers for low incidence disabilities, and teachers for emotionally disturbed students.

The district currently lacks a speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist (OT); however, the district is contracting with an NPA to provide some OT and speech and language services for the remainder of this school year. These NPA services are extremely costly and do not always meet all the requirements of the students' IEPs. The contract cost of the NPA's OT services has risen from \$115 to \$120 per hour. If this NPA were to provide OT services for 2007-08 for all of the district's students with IEPs containing OT designations, the cost to the district would range from \$105,000 to \$125,000, exclusive of assessment costs.

The vacant OT position is full time with an annual salary range of \$46,421 to \$59,992. This position has been difficult to fill. The district recently compared its OT salary with other districts in Santa Cruz County and found that it is lower than others.

Expanded recruitment efforts and working through the negotiations process to possibly revise the salary levels could improve the district's chances of recruiting and retaining qualified personnel for the OT and speech and language therapist positions. Many districts send recruiting teams to the annual conference of the California Speech Language Hearing Association (CSHA) at a reasonable cost. These teams are often prepared to offer temporary contracts for therapy services at the conference. Countywide job postings and local colleges

and universities also offer opportunities for recruiting qualified candidates. In addition, many districts in California that have difficulty recruiting teachers and administrators are eliminating the requirement that teachers be placed on a salary schedule based on years of experience.

The California SELPA Administrators organization is currently conducting a statewide survey of salaries for speech and language therapists. Once completed, this information could be used to help the district determine competitive salaries for these positions.

The district might benefit from a Certificated Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA) position working under the supervision of an OT. This position could reduce costs and increase efficiency by reducing the FTE in an OT position. Occupational Therapists and COTAs are both classified positions, and the current maximum caseload for an OT position is 39 students.

Students who need assistance only with handwriting could be served by a teacher who has received appropriate professional development training from the OT. In addition, training teachers and parents in OT services can enable them to better support students. Many services can be reinforced at home and in the classroom if training is provided.

The number of autistic students has increased significantly nationwide and in the district. Because occupational therapists spend a great deal of time with these students, discussions need to be held with parents, teachers, and occupational therapists regarding services to students with Asperger syndrome and autism. Because occupational therapy services and speech and language services can become issues with parents, it is important that everyone have an opportunity to communicate.

Speech and language services are provided by a NPA, but the NPA does not have time to provide services to all students. The NPA provider is equivalent to a 0.8 full time equivalent (FTE) position at an expense to the district of up to \$105,000 per year. The majority of services are provided to students from Brook Knoll and Vine Hill schools. A total of 115 students have IEPs that include speech and language services, representing 4.23% of the district's total enrollment.

Developing appropriate exit criteria for programs such as OT and speech and language can reduce costs and ensure that students who need these services receive the greatest possible benefit. Occupational therapy is a designated instructional service (DIS) and students must meet one of the eligibility requirements in Title V Regulations 3030 A-J. A common best practice is to discuss exit criteria with parents at the first IEP meeting and at every subsequent meeting.

Reviewing caseloads will help the administration determine the current FTE needs for the district's speech and language services. Based on the district's enrollment projections, the FTE needs can also be projected in the out years. The district currently follows the Education Code's maximum limit of 55 students.

Reviewing individual speech and language cases can provide clarity and direction. When reviewing cases, it is very important that the district carefully identify the area of need and review the length of time the student has been receiving the service. For example, if an eighth grade student has a frontal lisp and has been receiving speech and language services since the first grade, the IEP team needs to evaluate how this articulation disorder is affecting the student's education. Some parents may feel that this service is necessary, and other parents may re-evaluate the situation and agree that the services are no longer appropriate. Older students need to be involved in these IEP meetings so that the team can consider their input.

A study of the Santa Cruz SELPA conducted in 2005 by Caryl Miller addressed speech and language services, including a discussion of exit criteria and numerous references. The study found that students were being overidentified as eligible for speech and language services on the basis of articulation. It should be noted that qualifying in this category requires evidence that the student's learning is negatively affected by the disability.

All school districts in California likely will need to develop new models for delivering speech and language services. The current delivery model has been in place for more than 27 years, and it is increasingly apparent that the time has come for educational agencies to consider other options. Using a variety of resources and input from all parties involved may be helpful in formulating other models for delivery of these services.

The district has the opportunity to hire instructional aides to work under the direct supervision of a credentialed speech and hearing specialist in accordance with Title V Regulation 3051.1. Should the district use this aide model, it would be prudent to develop program guidelines, job descriptions and a separate salary schedule for speech aides.

Depending on the number of referrals for speech and language services, it may be beneficial to provide annual professional training to primary teachers regarding appropriate speech and language referrals. This could reduce time the therapist spends assessing students who may not be eligible for special education, and it may provide teachers with ideas for including more language activities in their classrooms. The district screens before referrals in the primary grades to determine the appropriateness of providing speech and language assessment.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Review the recently conducted local OT salary comparison, and consider reviewing salary schedules in districts such as San Mateo and Santa Clara.
2. Meet with staff in the OT department regarding recruitment, field work and the district's long term needs. Contact San Jose State University about future candidates.

3. Consider establishing a Certificated Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA) position to work under the direction and supervision of an OT.
4. Consider reviewing the caseload of the OT and allowing appropriately trained teachers to serve students who only need assistance with handwriting. The district general education teachers use the Handwriting without Tears program.

If this recommendation is implemented, the OT should provide teachers with professional development training in handwriting programs such as Handwriting Without Tears.

5. Ensure that the occupational therapist continues to provide and expand training to teachers and parents regarding OT services.
6. Continue to hold discussions between occupational therapists, teachers and parents of students with Asperger syndrome and autism to facilitate a clear understanding of the services provided.
7. Consider reviewing and developing exit criteria for all special education programs, including OT and especially speech and language. Exit criteria should be discussed with parents at the first IEP meeting and all subsequent meetings. Exit criteria are currently in place for speech and language.

The district should review the Termination of Placement in Special Education Programs section of the North Santa Cruz SELPA Policy. In addition, the Sonoma County SELPA has exit criteria for speech and language services that may prove helpful.

8. Ensure that individual speech and language cases are reviewed. The special education administrator and program specialist should meet with the speech and language therapist to review individual cases. Older students should be included and their input considered in this process.
- 10 Review all speech and language caseloads and answer the following questions for each case:
 - How long has the student been receiving services?
 - What is the age and grade of the student?
 - How was the student's eligibility determined?
 - Is the student receiving services for maintenance only?
 - Are the speech and language difficulties affecting academic growth?
 - In accordance with Education Code Section 56303 and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, has the teacher exhausted all regular education remedies prior to making a referral to special education?

11. Contact the San Diego City Schools, Office of Instructional Support for a copy of their manual titled *Articulation Differences and Disorders Manual* after it has been completed. This resource would provide the therapists with written procedures and practices for providing speech and language services.

Contact the North Inland Special Education Region in Ramona, California for a copy of their Communication Severity Scale, Articulation/Phonology. This scale will assist therapists in demonstrating eligibility criteria to IEP teams.
12. Consider requesting and using information from the statewide survey of speech and language therapist salaries being conducted by the California SELPA Administrators' organization to determine competitive salaries. The interim administrator of the North Santa Cruz County SELPA may be able to provide this information.
13. Consider holding a community forum regarding speech and language services. Invite parents, teachers, therapists, principals and others to review the current delivery of services and discuss other options and ideas. Consider using ideas from the San Diego City Schools' *Articulation Differences and Disorders Manual* as a starting point for discussion, as well as information from the North Santa Cruz County SELPA study conducted by Caryl Miller.
14. Review the delivery of speech and language services to determine the feasibility of hiring instructional aides to work under the direct supervision of credentialed language, speech and hearing specialists in accordance with Title V, Regulation 3051.1. If this option is chosen, consider developing guidelines, job descriptions and a separate salary schedule for these instructional aide positions through the negotiations process.
15. Review the number of referrals for speech and language services. If it appears high, consider providing annual training to primary teachers regarding appropriate speech and language referrals.
16. Consider expanding teacher recruitment efforts, including the following:
 - Contact the California-Speech-Language-Hearing Association (CSHA) regarding the possibility of recruiting at their annual conference,
 - Post positions in the Santa Cruz County Office of Education and the SELPA office.
 - Post positions at colleges and universities that offer speech and language degrees, such as Sacramento State University and other nearby training programs.
17. Review the current salary for the speech and language therapist position and consider salary enhancement options such as placing this position on a salary schedule that is not based on prior years of teaching experience. The district has an agreement with teacher bargaining unit that supports a salary agreement for this position beyond the teachers' salary schedule.

18. Carefully monitor and document compensatory education for each student in the areas of speech and language and OT services.

Consider mailing a letter to each family at the end of the current school year detailing which compensatory services the student is entitled to receive.

Students with Low Incidence Disabilities

Special education students with low-incidence disabilities often require interpreters, aides, technology such as brailers, and other services to receive an appropriate education. Thus the cost to the district of serving these students can be high. Low incidence disabilities are defined in Education Code 56026.5 and are described as a severe disabling condition with an expected incidence rate of less than 1% of the total statewide K-12 enrollment. These disabling conditions include hearing impairments, vision impairments and severe orthopedic impairments, or any combination of the three. In 2006-07, the district had 17 students with low incidence disabilities. In the same year, the SELPA received \$8,850 for these services, which it allocated to the districts based on pupil count. The district received \$1,175 of these funds. The district did not receive any additional state or federal dollars beyond those received for all special education students.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Help IEP teams develop long term plans for students with low incidence disabilities. Focus on the services students will need to support their education in two years, four years and beyond, then budget accordingly.

Autism Services

Educators nationwide and in the district need to examine how tolerance and understanding of individual differences are taught in classrooms and on school campuses. There is an increasing body of research in this area as well as a newly formed autism committee under the leadership of California's Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Autism trainings for staff, and especially for parents, need to be ongoing and frequent to develop positive and cooperative relationships between families and school districts. The Northern California Diagnostic School is an excellent resource for professional development at no cost to districts. Sharing resources with parents and staff can also be helpful. For example, the article titled "Autism, Autobiography, and Adaptations" in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, Volume 36, No 4, March/April 2004 contains a list of books on autism written by people with autism and Asperger's syndrome and would be an excellent resource.

The district does not appear to have or share professional profiles of the staff who work in the area of autism. Profiles can help document staff experience and knowledge and serve as an informative resource for parents.

Three of the district's autistic students are served in NPS programs. The program specialist needs to work closely with these three students and meet with parents and school staff regarding their progress.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Develop an autism committee made up of parents (including parents with students in regional programs), general education teachers and special education staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the district's autism programs. Principals in conjunction with the administrative special education staff or a designee should facilitate these meetings.

The committee should review the effective therapy/treatment or instructional programs in the following areas:

- Curriculum and instruction
 - One to one aide support
 - Interaction with peers
 - Assessments and evaluations
 - Current research and effective practices
 - Methods and approaches in intervention and educational planning
 - Professional development needs for parents and staff
 - Outcome based instruction
 - Eligibility and exit criteria
2. Consider developing, in cooperation with the SELPA, professional training for parents and staff regarding autism, and creating a two-year calendar of training based on a needs assessment from parents and staff. Consider using the resources of the Northern California Diagnostic School for this purpose.

If the SELPA is unable to arrange for professional training, it should be coordinated by the school districts.
 3. Require administrators and the program specialist to observe regional programs and meet with the administrators of those programs to discuss their observations and recommendations.

4. Review the Miller study of SELPA regional programs and consider implementing its recommendations regarding autism services where feasible.
5. Ensure that the program specialist works closely with the three students in the NPS programs and meets with parents and the school staff regarding student progress.
6. Review and implement the most recent edition of the *Best Practices Handbook for Individuals with Autistic Spectrum Disorders* published by the California Department of Education (CDE).
7. Continue to ensure that special education staff receive professional development training in all areas of program delivery that are recommended as a result of the research on what is effective for students with autism, including applied behavioral analysis (ABA).
8. Develop professional profiles of staff members who work in the area of autism, listing each staff member's experience and professional training in this area. Share these profiles with parents.
9. Acquire and share with parents and staff copies of the article titled "Autism, Autobiography and Adaptations" in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, Volume 36, No 4, March/April 2004 (published by the Council for Exceptional Children).

Student Study Teams (SSTs)

Student study teams are operating effectively at most of the district's schools. These teams have helped reduce the number of students referred to special education. The district has 8.6% of its students in special education, which is lower than the statewide average. Because SSTs do not receive special education funding, it is important to involve special education staff members only on a consulting basis rather than as full time members of the SSTs, 504 teams or response to intervention (RTI). These programs need to be supported by general education funds.

As RTI becomes more common in California, districts will need to review sources of funding other than special education funds to implement these alternative programs and services for all students. For example, a learning center service delivery model at the middle school might be used to serve all students, including those needing extra intervention.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Continue professional development training for teachers in the area of intervention. The district started RTI training two years ago with the component on awareness and is now moving to implementation.

2. Review and consider the possibility of a learning center model at the Middle School where all learners could receive both formal and informal support.
3. Review options at the high school for students who are not eligible for special education but need extra educational support and intervention.

Nonpublic School (NPS) Placements

Three of the district's students currently attend nonpublic schools (NPS), which are one of four placement options in special education. Other options include special day class (SDC), resource specialists program (RSP) and designated instruction and services (DIS). Although these three students represent 1.26% of the district's special education pupil count, NPS services for them are very costly, requiring 9.67% of the district's special education program budget, excluding transportation. The district does not currently have local programs and services to appropriately serve these students.

The district is responsible for the assessment of students in NPS programs but may not be conducting sufficient comprehensive assessments. Comprehensive assessments at each student's three-year evaluation could be helpful. There is a need for the IEP team to revisit the eligibility criteria to determine if and why the student needs an NPS placement, and to review all current assessments, the learning rate of the student, the success indicators and the student's behavioral improvement over the past year. This information is needed if the IEP teams are to make appropriate placement decisions.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Require the program specialists to meet with the NPS staff approximately every four months to discuss each student's progress and the long term educational plan for each student. These visits should be documented on a standard reporting form developed by the district. A copy of the reporting form should be provided to the superintendent and the assistant superintendent of student services. In addition, the data from these visits should be shared with the student's parents and should become part of the student's cumulative record.
2. Continue requiring that a comprehensive assessment be conducted at each student's three-year evaluation, and ensure that the IEP team reviews all current assessments and information on each student's progress and status.
3. Offer training for NPS programs that perform the required state testing. The district should consider offering professional development training, including training in state testing, curriculum, effective teaching strategies and other areas, to NPSs that have master agreements with the district. This might be accomplished by school districts in collaboration with the SELPA.

Program Specialists and SELPA Support

In 2006-07, the district hired a special education program specialist. The job description for this position closely aligns with Education Code section 56368, which describes the instructional program support that may be provided by program specialists. A program specialist can be an integral part of a district's special education community, working with parents and staff, particularly on difficult cases, and developing relationships with parents that can help to eliminate or reduce potential litigation.

The state provides SELPAs with specific funding that can be used only for providing regionalized services and the services of a program specialist, as specified in EC Section 56836.23 (More information is available in the Appendix section of this report).

The original Santa Cruz/San Benito SELPA used some of those funds to provide program specialist services to school districts in the past. When that SELPA separated into three SELPAs, North Santa Cruz County, Parajo Valley, and San Benito County, the position was eliminated in North Santa Cruz County SELPA.

The current FY 2006-07 funding for regionalized services/regional program specialist services is \$263,541. The SELPA governing board has elected to utilize all of that funding for the SELPA's administrative office staff and regionalized services. None of the funds are used to provide the support services of a regional program specialist and none are allocated to the districts to provide these services.

FCMAT recognizes that the SELPA receives limited regionalized service/program specialist funds; however, a 2005-06 study of the North Santa Cruz County SELPA by Caryl Miller proposed a different SELPA funding allocation that might change the distribution and allocation of funds in the SELPA and provide support for program specialist services. The SELPA task force report, dated March 21, 2005, also raised some significant issues and recommendations that merit discussion and exploration. FCMAT found that many of the recommendations in the Miller study and/or the task force report have not been implemented, including recommendations regarding the following areas:

- SELPA staffing
- NPS/NPA extraordinary cost pools
- One-to-one instructional assistance
- Professional development
- Special education encroachment
- Regional and county-operated programs
- Fiscal allocation
- Transfer of programs

Since the district has essentially employed a program specialist, it may be appropriate to submit these issues to the governing council and determine what has been accomplished in the SELPA and what areas still need attention/support at the SELPA and district levels.

The North Santa Cruz County SELPA needs to consider an organizational structure that will give all districts the direction and support needed to address these areas of critical need in the near future. One option may be to consider the issues that need immediate attention and how districts or a combination of districts might take responsibility for leading the change efforts. Implementation of any recommendation and tentative plans would need to be approved by the SELPA governing council. For example, the one-to-one instructional assistance program is extremely costly and has a fiscal impact on all SELPA districts and thus merits a SELPA-wide review.

Maintenance of effort (MOE) calculations are made at the SELPA level, but depend on and consolidate local educational agencies' (LEAs') expenditure data to determine if the SELPA as a whole has met the MOE requirements.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider reviewing with the SELPA governing council the North Santa Cruz County SELPA study of 2005-06 by Caryl Miller and the SELPA task force report date by March 21, 2005 to address issues that are important for all SELPA districts. If the SELPA is not able to attend to these issues, consider the possibility that a district or a combination of districts might be able to address the issues that need immediate attention by taking responsibility for implementing changes.
2. Discuss the use of state funds for regional/program specialist services with the SELPA governing council and explore how a portion of these required funds might be shared with school districts which have program specialists.
3. Require the school district CBO and director of business to continue working with the SELPA office to ensure that communications and data which impact the maintenance of effort (MOE) are accurate and submitted in a timely manner.

Special Circumstances Instructional Assistance

Statewide, the number of school districts using one-to-one aides has risen dramatically, which has significantly affected special education funding and programs.

The SELPA and the district have a one-to-one special circumstance instructional assistance (SCIA) program for special education students who require one-to-one support for inclusion, health care needs and behavioral assistance. Seven students in county-operated special education classrooms receive one-to-one support; the 2006-07 NPA contract for \$570,000 includes one student receiving one-to-one special circumstance instructional assistance in a district-operated program; and three students enrolled in county-operated programs receive one-to-one support from another NPA at a contract cost of \$64,579. The total contract cost for the two current NPA programs is \$634,579.

The district currently provides aides in resource specialist (RSP) and special day class (SDC) programs; however, the number of one-to-one aides has increased significantly, including additional aides in the district's elementary and middle school special education programs. The 2005-06 study by Caryl Miller cited previously in this report stated, "A

consensus exists between the county office administration and school districts that there is an over-use and over-reliance on one-to-one aides, as well as a lack of a coordinated effort to control such a dependency.” The district has attempted to reduce one-to-one assistance by using the intensive behavior specialist paraprofessionals.

A SELPA policy was adopted in March 2006 regarding a formal procedure to determine the need for one-to-one aides; however, the number of one-to-one aides continues to increase. It appears that the adopted policy and procedures regarding one-to-one aides are not being used consistently throughout the district or in regional or county office-operated programs. As a result they tend to be ignored by IEP teams. In addition, not all staff members and parents are aware of these policies and procedures, including some members of the IEP teams.

The current name for the one-to-one SCIA program was also adopted by the SELPA board in March 2006 but may need to be changed to improve understanding and recognition on the part of parents and staff.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Review the one-to-one special circumstance program to determine if all necessary components are in place such as letters to parents, interview forms and other procedures. The district should also do the following:
 - Ensure that the one-to-one special circumstance program is implemented when an initial request for a one-to-one assistant is made as well as at annual IEP meetings.
 - Ensure that the IEP team includes an appropriate exit plan when implementing one-to-one SCIA programs for students.
 - Develop a procedure to be followed if a one-to-one support employee is absent.
 - Develop a districtwide plan detailing how the SCIA program will be implemented for students attending programs in the district and those attending programs outside of the district.
 - Establish professional development training for teachers and parents regarding the SCIA program.
2. Come to consensus on a name for the one-to-one SCIA program so that parents and staff can identify and better understand the program.
3. Adopt a board policy outlining the implementation of the one-to-one SCIA program, and establish a target date for implementation. Processes and procedures should be developed and documented. Staff, including staff in regional programs, should receive professional development training regarding the policy and procedures. Program implementation should also be documented and the documents kept on file in the special education office.

4. Consider creating a professional development program in cooperation with neighboring districts to provide teachers and other staff with in-service training workshops regarding the one-to-one SCIA program. Contact the Napa Valley Unified School District for information regarding their one-to-one SCIA program.
5. Consider requiring the special education department to work with the human resources department to develop job descriptions for one-to-one SCIA positions. Review the effectiveness of utilizing outside agencies to perform this function.
6. Work with the business office to provide appropriate budgets and salaries for the one-to-one SCIA positions.
7. Ensure that the person responsible for the one-to-one SCIA program is someone other than the program specialist because he or she may be needed to provide assistance to IEP teams responsible for reviewing one-to-one support requests.
8. Develop a procedure for evaluating the effectiveness of the one-to-one SCIA program. The development of the procedure should seek to answer questions such as, “What will be the descriptors of success for this program?” A weekly progress report on the development process should be provided to the superintendent.

The evaluation process itself should include school personnel, students, budget review and information on student progress.
9. Provide teachers, aides and parents with regularly scheduled professional development training regarding behavioral issues.

Due Process

Public Law 94-142 was originally enacted in 1975 and created significant changes in how students with special educational needs were educated. Although there have been significant changes to this law, it continues to provide procedural safeguards that are designed to protect the rights of parents and their children with disabilities, as well as to give families and public agencies a mechanism for resolving disputes. These safeguards give parents numerous rights including confidentiality of information; access to education records; the right to request that records be amended; mediation; due process; and filing a complaint with the state department of education. Revisions to the law in 2004 included changes in the resolution process, mediation, and other aspects of due process.

The district’s special education administration has worked diligently to prevent costly mediation and due process hearings, and it appears that the current settlements are in the best interest of the district.

Statewide, most due process hearings involve the following areas:

- Autism and autism spectrum disorders
- Transition to preschool programs
- One-to-one instructional aide support

Much research has been published recently about the difficulties parents and families of special education students experience when their children transition from one educational level to another, such as from middle school to high school. These transitions can cause parents and families significant frustration and anxiety. Educators must remain aware of the potential for stress and work to ensure clear communication between the families and the school district. Negative experiences for parents or students can increase the likelihood of due process proceedings and litigation.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Continue using standards-based IEPs as they relate to the report card. Annually demonstrate the success of student learning in special education programs, by student and by classroom.
2. Require that a form be developed by teachers and administrators that will specify the criteria for success for each student.
3. Meet periodically with families in the infant special education programs to ensure a smooth transition to preschool special education programs, if appropriate.
4. Hold informational meetings with parents of children who may enter preschool special education program before these children are 2 1/2 years old .
5. Ensure that informal settlements are put in writing and are applicable only for one year. The settlements should clearly spell out the agreement and the conditions of the agreement as well as alternatives or options to be discussed at later dates.

IEP Process and Forms

A random sample of IEPs for students from the ages of three to 21 currently attending district and regional special education programs found that appropriate services were documented by assessment reports, student observations, goals and objectives, and the offer of a FAPE. The SELPA's IEP form meets current federal and state requirements in accordance with Education Code section 56345. FCMAT found that the IEP process time lines were followed, appropriate team members were present, and all necessary documents met legal requirements. Principals attend IEP meetings as administrators. The December 2006 California Special Education Management Information System (CASEMIS) reported that five IEPs were overdue; however, these were the result of parent work schedules and family scheduling conflicts.

The SELPA has a policy regarding exit criteria; however, the IEP has no place on the form to address this issue. The importance of exit criteria is discussed in another section of this report.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Work with the SELPA in developing exit criteria to be included on IEP forms.

Transportation

The district does not provide point-to-point transportation for regular education students. The district does provide the following point to point transportation services for special education students:

- Transportation within the district to district programs away from a student's home school.
- Transportation for students with severe disabilities to programs operated in the district by the county office.
- Transportation to programs outside of the district operated by the county office, Soquel Union Elementary School District and nonpublic schools.

The district's special education transportation program consists of two district-operated school buses and contracted transportation service provided by Michael's Transportation services.

Over a four-year period, the district's cost for contracted transportation service has increased by 96.55%, from \$209,211.17 in 2003-04 to \$411,200 budgeted for 2006-07, of which \$339,754.60 has been spent to date. Contracted transportation costs increased only 21.03% between 2005-06 and 2006-07. Costs were affected when the district's transportation vendor sold the service to another vendor. An increase in competition may help stabilize or even decrease costs slightly in 2007-08.

The district held discussions with the Santa Cruz City Schools regarding the possibility that Santa Cruz City Schools might provide transportation services; however, this did not occur because Santa Cruz City Schools was not able to expand its transportation fleet.

Policies and Procedures

The district has a "Transportation for Students with Disabilities" policy (Administrative Regulation 3541.2(a), May 11, 1998) which provides for the transportation of students with severe disabilities, orthopedic disabilities and low incidence disabilities. The policy authorizes the IEP team to determine the need for special transportation, and it provides for the transportation of students with mild disabilities to school sites other than their home school. Administrative Regulation (AR) 3541.2(a) also requires that students with disabilities who are enrolled via inter-district transfer receive transportation services from their district of residence.

The district has a general school transportation plan (January 1, 1998) that complies with California Education Code 39831.3 and AB 1297. This plan outlines the duties and responsibilities of the district, bus drivers and students. Parents receive a copy of the plan each year.

The district has procedures in place to reduce transportation use and costs by using pick-up points rather than door-to-door service whenever possible. However, the district does not have a parent transportation handbook which outlines emergency procedures to be followed when parents are not at home or at pick-up points to receive students.

Services and Costs

The district's state transportation revenue allocation for the 2006-2007 fiscal year is estimated at \$40,370. The district-operated transportation costs have increased from \$26,255 in 2003-04 to a budgeted total of \$40,370 for 2006-07, an increase of 53.57% over a four year period.

The current fees for contracted transportation services are as follows:

- A minimum of six hours per route or a flat fee of \$375 for four daily routes.
- \$2.15 per mile or a minimum of \$375 for routes over highway 17 to nonpublic school programs in the San Jose area.
- A fuel surcharge of 1% for every 10 cents that diesel fuel prices rise above \$2.95 per gallon at the local Shell station in Scotts Valley, and a 1% discount when the price falls below \$2.50 per gallon.

A review of transportation billing indicates that the average contract service provider cost per route is \$458.33 and the average cost per day is \$2,750.00, not including the fuel surcharge.

The district operates and maintains two school buses to transport two medically fragile students. Their condition requires that the students spend a limited time being transported. These students are transported door to door.

The district does not provide parents with options or payments in lieu of transportation services.

**Table 1: Comparison of 2005-06 Special Education Transportation Costs
with Comparable Districts**

District Name	Enrollment	Sp. Ed. District of Svc.	SPED District of Res.	Percent SPED	Cost Per Mile		Cost per Student	
					Hm to Sch	Severely disabled/ orthopedically impaired	Hm to Sch	Severely disabled/ orthopedically impaired
Delhi Unified	2,636	239	292	11.08%	\$5.34	\$0.00	\$728.64	\$0.00
Dos Palos Oro Loma Joint Unified	2,679	314	336	12.54%	\$4.54	\$0.00	\$951.59	\$0.00
Plumas Unified	2,882	321	325	11.28%	\$3.35	\$0.00	\$1,030.70	\$0.00
Carpentaria Unified	2,708	288	320	11.82%	\$10.48	\$3.31	\$1,090.84	\$4,238.34
Coronado Unified	2,905	355	358	12.32%	\$5.50	\$12.25	\$907.84	\$12,251.48
Scotts Valley Unified	2,771	200	239	8.63%	\$2.22	\$5.36	\$7,676.85	\$13,752.34
Laguna Beach Unified	2,861	249	251	8.77%	\$6.91	\$4.77	\$864.99	\$16,763.84
State Wide Average	6,312,436		683,178	10.82%	\$4.79	\$1.76	\$1,250.38	\$2,678.59

Data Source: District CBEDS/Special Education Pupil Count – DataQuest

District Transportation - Sue Cervantes, School Fiscal Services Division

Comparison Costs: State Annual Report, 2005-06

Table 1 compares similar-sized (CBEDS/Special Education Pupil Count) districts. The comparison costs are from the State Annual Report 2005-2006. The home to school data does not include sufficient detail to show regular and nonsevere special education transportation. The severe disabilities and orthopedically impaired transportation figures are comparable, but only four districts provide that transportation.

Data in Table 1 indicates the following:

1. Scotts Valley Unified has the lowest ratio of identified special education pupils (8.63%).
2. Scotts Valley Unified has the lowest cost per mile for home-to-school transportation and the second-highest cost per mile for students with severe disabilities or orthopedic impairments.
3. Scotts Valley Unified is the only district of comparable size that exceeds the statewide average of cost per student for home to school transportation (includes students with nonsevere disabilities and orthopedic impairments and SD/OI).
4. All comparable districts and Scotts Valley Unified exceed the statewide average for transporting students with severe disabilities and orthopedic impairments.

Table 2: District and Contractor Transportation Service Costs

Comparison 2006-2007	Cost	Students	Days	Cost Per Day
District Transportation	\$40,370.00	2	200	\$100.93
Contract Transportation	\$411,200.00	28	200	\$73.43

As indicated in Table 2, the district provides home-to-school transportation for two students with orthopedic impairments to Santa Cruz County Office of Education out-of-district programs, at a cost of \$100.93 per day, based on 200 days per year.

The district contracts with Michael's Transportation Services, which provides in-district and out-of-district transportation to 28 students at a cost of \$73.43 per pupil, per day, based on 200 days per year. This includes service for six students who attend two district special day classes at two separate elementary school sites, as well as for 22 district students with severe disabilities and/or orthopedic impairments who attend regional programs in the district and in adjacent districts. Some students may require door-to-door transportation because of their disabilities.

The district is conducting discussions with additional transportation providers regarding possible contracted services for the 2007-08 fiscal year. One potential provider has raised the possibility of hiring local personnel as bus drivers and locating vehicles, on district sites to eliminate "deadhead" mileage costs, as well as using the districts current vehicle maintenance facilities.

The cost of district-operated transportation will continue to increase because of cost increases for supervision, salaries and benefits, clerical, maintenance and capital outlay to replace aging buses.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider reducing, or eliminating, district-operated transportation to reduce costs.
Consider negotiating with transportation providers for services to meet the needs of the district's two orthopedically impaired students. It may be possible to serve these students at a lower cost through last on/first off service on a scheduled bus route with other special education students, and/or if the provider offers discounts for this service as part of a total transportation contract.
2. Continue discussions with transportation service providers, using the district's parking and maintenance facilities as incentive.
3. Re-open discussions with the Santa Cruz City Schools regarding the possibility of Santa Cruz City Schools providing transportation services, using the district's sites and maintenance facilities.

5. Consider providing in-lieu transportation payments to parents of students who require limited transportation time and/or students who attend nonpublic schools outside of Santa Cruz County.
6. Review inter-district agreements to ensure that each student's district of residence is providing transportation, or that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is in place to reimburse Scotts Valley for special education transportation.
7. Review services for students attending regional and district learning disabilities programs away from their home school and, if feasible, reduce transportation costs by returning students to district-operated programs and to programs at their home schools. These changes may be facilitated by changes in program delivery recommended earlier in this report, including providing a learning center model of service for some students. The following program changes might also reduce transportation costs:
 - Opening special day classes at each elementary site to allow students to receive services at their home school, with placement by age and/or functioning level.
 - When caseloads permit, allowing RSP services at elementary sites to serve some students with less severe disabilities who are now enrolled in SDC, thus reducing SDC caseloads.
 - Adding one RSP position split between two elementary sites to assist higher functioning SDC students with severe learning disabilities in a learning center environment. This may require additional instructional assistant hours.
8. With input from transportation staff and contract transportation providers, develop a parent transportation handbook that provides information regarding the following.
 - Duties and responsibilities of district staff, transportation providers, parents and students.
 - Parent responsibilities for delivery and pick up of student to/from transfer point.
 - Procedures for when a parent is not present to pick up a student.
 - Procedures for notifying parents and students regarding any changes from the normal transportation routine.
 - Emergency procedures.

Regional Programs

Transportation for Preschool and Kindergarten Special Education

Federal and state laws require that all eligible students residing in a SELPA have equal access to special education programs and services, regardless of their district of residence. The North Santa Cruz County SELPA has developed policies and procedures regarding how these programs will be operated and funded and which services will be provided. The district uses regional program services provided by the Santa Cruz County Office of Education at sites in the district and in adjacent districts, as well as services provided by Santa Cruz City Schools, Soquel Union School District and Cabrillo Community College. All regional programs and services contracted through the county office and adjacent school districts are fully funded. It appears that this SELPA policy was implemented in 1998-99 and that funding is determined by the program operator's projected operating costs.

The funding for regional programs is as follows:

- 50% of regional program costs are assessed on AB 602 funds, based on each district's proportional share of K-12 average daily attendance (ADA).
- 50% of the regional program costs are assessed based on each district's use. The total cost of the specific program services (SDC, DIS, RSP), including related services, is divided by the number of students using the specific service. The district is then billed accordingly.
- If additional services are required that have not been projected, the district is responsible for the total cost of the additional services.

Infant programs and federally funded preschool programs are not included in these figures.

It appears that the SELPA allocates preschool and AB 602 revenues to the districts to operate or purchase preschool services. The current program requires the district to provide special education transportation to sites outside of a student's district of residence. The current student population and projected number of students transitioning from Early Start would result in eight to 10 students per year needing preschool special education services.

The district receives and uses federal, state and AB 602 funds to purchase transportation services to Soquel Union Elementary School District for six of its preschool special education students served in that district.

In addition, the district pays excess costs for special services such as one-to-one assistance and behavioral support when required.

A SELPA list generated in August 2006 indicated that two district infant program students would transition to preschool in the coming year, one in January 2007 and one in December 2007. The district anticipates that two or three Early Start students will transition to preschool each year.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider assuming the program responsibilities for the Soquel preschool special day class. This would reduce out-of-district transportation costs, but would not eliminate transportation in the district.
2. Consider reviewing with the SELPA and the Soquel Union Elementary School District the impact on the district of assuming responsibility for preschool special education programs.

If this is considered a program transfer, review the transfer policy to determine time lines and procedures for notifying the SELPA districts and the county office of education.

If the change is not considered a program transfer, meet with the Soquel Unified School District to plan for staffing and transition of students. This planning should include the parents of the students involved.

3. Consider meeting with the SELPA governing council to discuss the district's concerns and the cost of transporting preschool children to regional preschool programs.
4. Consider operating a district preschool/kindergarten program that provides services to some of the lower performing students with disabilities who need additional specialized and remedial support. This would serve students and enable the district to receive revenue limit funds not currently received when these students are served in the Soquel Union Elementary School district.
5. Calculate the cost of operating preschool and kindergarten special education programs and develop a budget for this purpose. The budget should include the cost of a teacher and two aides, curriculum, equipment and supplies, professional development and assessment kits, and other items.

Transportation to Out-of-District Services

The data in Table 3 shows that students transported out of the district to a variety of sites for services vary in age both among and within several disability categories.

Table 3: Students Transported Out of District for Regional Services

Student ID	Age	Disability	Site	Service District
1	12.03	AUT	B40JH	SCCS
24	8.11	AUT	Vine Hill - DIS	SVUSD
30	10.11	AUT	Westlake - COE	SCCS
29	10.05	ED	Westlake - COE	SCCS
6	20.04	ED	Cabrillo Post Senior	SCCC
11	14.09	ED	New Brighton Middle - COE	SUESD
18	15.11	MD	Soquel High School	SUESD
3	10.04	MR	Brook Knoll - COE	SVUSD
21	15.03	MR	Soquel High School	SUESD
28	9.03	OHI	Westlake - COE	SCCS
27	8.00	OI	Vine Hill - DIS	SVUSD
9	11.04	OI	NBMS COE	SUESD
8	6.09	OI	Green Acres - SCCOE	LOSD
19	22.08	OI	Soquel High School	SUESD
10	13.09	OI	New Brighton Middle - COE	SUESD
5	10.04	SLD	Brook Knoll - LH	SVUSD
26	9.10	SLD	Vine Hill - DIS	SVUSD
4	9.09	SLI	Brook Knoll - LH	SVUSD
25	9.09	SLI	Vine Hill - DIS	SVUSD
20	17.03	VI	Soquel High School	SUESD
2	8.07		Bay School (private)	NPS

Age as of March 2007

AUT=autism; ED=emotionally disturbed; MD=multiple disabilities; MR=mentally retarded; OHI=other health impaired; OI=orthopedic impairment; SLD=severe learning disability; SLI=speech/language impaired; VI=visually impaired.

Seven severely disabled elementary school students from seven to 11 years of age receive regional services offered in three regional classes in other districts, one district class operated by the county office and one private school. Seven severely disabled students from 14 to 22 years of age receive services at two regional classes in other districts and one community college class. One middle school student with severe learning disabilities also receives regional services.

As noted earlier, 50% of the cost of providing regional programs is derived from the fees charged to districts whose students are participating in them. The district uses these programs and pays “use fees” for students attending regional programs. The services for severely disabled students cannot easily be provided by age because the functioning level and physical maturity must also be considered when placing students. The district does not have enough students to make it feasible to provide a continuity of services for these students through district-operated programs.

It appears that the school district and the SELPA have conducted special education studies in the past; however, it does not appear that the recommendations have always been implemented.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Evaluate the middle school students with severe learning disabilities for inclusion with the 17 other students between 12 to 14 years of age who are currently served in district programs. If appropriate services can be provided in district programs, the district could reduce transportation and use costs.
2. Continue using regional programs to serve students with disabilities when the district cannot provide services because of the small number of students and the wide variety of disabilities and functioning levels.
3. Meet with parents to discuss the concerns of the district in attempting to identify appropriate programs and services.

Transportation In the District

The district transports one special education student with severe disabilities to a county office-operated program at a district site and eight special education students with various disabilities to district sites operating age-appropriate services.

Table 4: Transportation of Students In the District

Student ID	Age	Disability	Site	Service District
5	10.07	SLD	Brook Knoll LH	SVUSD
3	10.07	MR	Brook Knoll COE	SVUSD
26	10.01	SLD	Vine Hill - DIS	SVUSD
4	10.00	SLI	Brook Knoll - LH	SVUSD
25	10.00	SLI	Vine Hill - DIS	SVUSD
24	9.02	AUT	Vine Hill - DIS	SVUSD
27	8.03	OI	Vine Hill - DIS	SVUSD
22	5.11	AUT	Vine Hill - K	SVUSD
23	2.06	SLI	Vine Hill - K - DIS	SVUSD

Age as of March 2007

SLD=severe learning disability; MR=mentally regarded; SLI=speech/language impaired; AUT=autism; OI=orthopedic impairment.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider consolidating district-operated special day classes at one site to reduce in-district transportation costs.
2. Consider reviewing caseloads for the special day class and resource specialist programs and, if possible, creating a special day class (SDC) or resource specialist program (RSP) position split between the two elementary sites to provide additional services to students at their home sites, reducing transportation costs.
3. Consider developing a continuum of program services using SDC, RSP and the learning center model recommended earlier in this report to serve students at their home school sites, reducing transportation costs.
4. Consider serving SDC students in an RSP setting for half a day or more if caseloads allow it, not exceeding a caseload of 28 students.

Appendices

- A: Transportation Budget and Expenditures
- B: Pertinent Education Code Sections
- C: Study Agreement

Table 1: Transportation Budget and Expenditure Detail from 2003-04 to 2006-07

Transportation		Year-to- Date Total	Year-to- Date Total	Percent Inc/Dec	Year-to- Date Total	Percent Inc/Dec	Adopted Budget	Percent Inc/Dec	4 year Percent
Object	Description	2003-2004	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007		Inc/Dec
8311	Other State Apportion	\$60,374.00	\$63,780.00	5.64%	\$39,355.00	-38.30%	\$38,944.00	-1.04%	-35.50%
8980	Contrib from Unrest Res	\$168,911.23	\$327,475.39	93.87%	\$331,958.18	1.37%	\$412,626.00	24.30%	144.29%
8999	Carryover/Cash Balance	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%	\$28,811.60	100.00%	\$ -	-100.00%	0.00%
8000	Total	\$229,285.23	\$391,255.39	70.64%	\$400,124.78	2.27%	\$451,570.00	12.86%	96.95%
2000	Classified Total	\$13,638.17	\$7,787.47	-42.90%	\$14,526.25	86.53%	\$17,471.00	20.27%	28.10%
3000	Benefit Total	\$5,998.12	\$3,808.59	-36.50%	\$7,537.00	97.89%	\$8,599.00	14.09%	43.36%
4000	Supplies Total	\$557.94	\$148.67	-73.35%	\$1,347.93	806.66%	\$2,400.00	78.05%	330.15%
5200	Mileage, Travel, Conf	\$750.02	\$0.00	-100.00%	\$0.00	0.00%	\$104.00	100.00%	-86.13%
5300	Dues & Membership	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%	\$0.00	0.00%	\$30.00	100.00%	100.00%
5620	Repairs	\$3,941.48	\$975.20	-75.26%	\$14,034.99	1339.19%	\$11,766.00	-16.17%	198.52%
5800	Other Svcs & Oper Expend	\$209,211.17	\$348,106.12	66.39%	\$339,754.60	-2.40%	\$411,200.00	21.03%	96.55%
5900	Communications	\$1,369.72	\$1,617.34	18.08%	\$0.00	-100.00%	\$ -	100.00%	-100.00%
5000	Total	\$215,272.39	\$350,698.66	62.91%	\$353,789.59	0.88%	\$423,100.00	19.59%	96.54%
1000-5999	Total	\$235,466.62	\$362,443.39	53.93%	\$377,200.77	4.07%	\$451,570.00	19.72%	91.78%
7310	Indirect Costs	\$0.00		0.00%	\$22,924.01	100.00%	\$ -	-100.00%	100.00%
1000-7000	Total	\$235,466.62	\$362,443.39	53.93%	\$400,124.78	10.40%	\$451,570.00	12.86%	91.78%
8000	Total	\$229,285.23	\$391,255.39	70.64%	\$400,124.78	2.27%	\$451,570.00	12.86%	96.95%
	Balance	-\$6,181.39	\$28,812.00	366.11%	\$0.00	-100.00%	\$ -	0.00%	-100.00%

Pertinent Education Code Sections

56368. (a) A program specialist is a specialist who holds a valid special education credential, clinical services credential, health services credential, or a school psychologist authorization and has advanced training and related experience in the education of individuals with exceptional needs and a specialized in-depth knowledge in preschool disabilities, career vocational development, or one or more areas of major disabling conditions.

(b) A program specialist may do all the following:

- (1) Observe, consult with, and assist resource specialists, designated instruction and services instructors, and special class teachers.
 - (2) Plan programs, coordinate curricular resources, and evaluate effectiveness of programs for individuals with exceptional needs.
 - (3) Participate in each school's staff development, program development, and innovation of special methods and approaches.
 - (4) Provide coordination, consultation and program development primarily in one specialized area or areas of his or her expertise.
 - (5) Be responsible for assuring that pupils have full educational opportunity regardless of the district of residence.
- (c) For purposes of Section 41403, a program specialist shall be considered a pupil services employee, as defined in subdivision (c) of Section 41401.

56836.23. Funds for regionalized operations and services and the direct instructional support of program specialists shall be apportioned to the special education local plan areas. As a condition to receiving those funds, the special education local plan area shall ensure that all functions listed below are performed in accordance with the description set forth in its local plan adopted pursuant to Section 56205:

- (a) Coordination of the special education local plan area and the implementation of the local plan.
- (b) Coordinated system of identification and assessment.
- (c) Coordinated system of procedural safeguards.
- (d) Coordinated system of staff development and parent and guardian education.
- (e) Coordinated system of curriculum development and alignment with the core curriculum.
- (f) Coordinated system of internal program review, evaluation of the effectiveness of the local plan, and implementation of a local plan accountability mechanism.
- (g) Coordinated system of data collection and management.
- (h) Coordination of interagency agreements.

- (i) Coordination of services to medical facilities.
- (j) Coordination of services to licensed children's institutions and foster family homes.
- (k) Preparation and transmission of required special education local plan area reports.
- (l) Fiscal and logistical support of the community advisory committee.
- (m) Coordination of transportation services for individuals with exceptional needs.
- (n) Coordination of career and vocational education and transition services.
- (o) Assurance of full educational opportunity.
- (p) Fiscal administration and the allocation of state and federal funds pursuant to Section 56836.01.
- (q) Direct instructional program support that may be provided by program specialists in accordance with Section 56368.

56836.25. Funds received pursuant to this article shall be expended for the purposes specified in Section 56836.23.

FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM
STUDY AGREEMENT

March 7, 2007

The FISCAL CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM (FCMAT), hereinafter referred to as the Team, and the Scotts Valley Unified School District, hereinafter referred to as the District, mutually agree as follows:

1. BASIS OF AGREEMENT

The Team provides a variety of services to school districts and county offices of education upon request. The District has requested that the Team provide for the assignment of professionals to study specific aspects of the Scotts Valley Unified School District operations. These professionals may include staff of the Team, County Offices of Education, the California State Department of Education, school districts, or private contractors. All work shall be performed in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

2. SCOPE OF THE WORK

A. Scope and Objectives of the Study

The scope and objectives of this study are to:

- 1) Conduct a review of the District's Special Education and Special Education Transportation programs and provide recommendations for changes and improvements, as necessary, to address the following questions:
 - Does the District provide additional services beyond those identified and required in student IEP's?
 - Does the District's IEP process meet all legal requirements?
 - Does the District's method of delivery for all special education program and transportation services enable them to effectively meet the needs of students while being fiscally efficient?
 - What alternative for special education transportation may be available to meet student needs?

B. Services and Products to be Provided

- 1) Orientation Meeting - The Team will conduct an orientation session at the District to brief District management and supervisory personnel on the procedures of the Team and on the purpose and schedule of the study.
- 2) On-site Review - The Team will conduct an on-site review at the District office and at school sites if necessary.

- 3) Progress Reports - The Team will hold an exit meeting at the conclusion of the on-site review to inform the District of significant findings and recommendations to that point.
- 4) Exit Letter - The Team will issue an exit letter approximately 10 days after the exit meeting detailing significant findings and recommendations to date and memorializing the topics discussed in the exit meeting.
- 5) Draft Reports - Sufficient copies of a preliminary draft report will be delivered to the District administration for review and comment.
- 6) Final Report - Sufficient copies of the final study report will be delivered to the District following completion of the review.

3. PROJECT PERSONNEL

The study team will be supervised by Anthony L. Bridges, Deputy Executive Officer, Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office. The study team may also include:

- A. Dr. William Gillaspie, FCMAT Management Analyst
- B. Dorothy Kay Atchison, FCMAT Special Education Consultant
- C. William Puddy, FCMAT Special Education Consultant

Other equally qualified consultants will be substituted in the event one of the above noted individuals is unable to participate in the study.

4. PROJECT COSTS

The cost for studies requested pursuant to E.C. 42127.8(d)(1) shall be:

- A. \$500.00 per day for each Team Member while on site, conducting fieldwork at other locations, preparing and presenting reports, or participating in meetings.
- B. All out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, meals, lodging, etc. Based on the elements noted in section 2 A, the total cost of the study is estimated at \$8,500. The District will be invoiced at actual costs, with 50% of the estimated cost due following the completion of the on-site review and the remaining amount due upon acceptance of the final report by the District
- C. Any change to the scope will affect the estimate of total cost.

Payments for FCMAT services are payable to Kern County Superintendent of Schools-Administrative Agent.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DISTRICT

- A. The District will provide office and conference room space while on-site reviews are in progress.
- B. The District will provide the following (if requested):

- 1) A map of the local area
- 2) Existing policies, regulations and prior reports addressing the study request
- 3) Current organizational charts
- 4) Current and four (4) prior year's audit reports
- 5) Any documents requested on a supplemental listing

C. The District Administration will review a preliminary draft copy of the study. Any comments regarding the accuracy of the data presented in the report or the practicability of the recommendations will be reviewed with the Team prior to completion of the final report.

Pursuant to EC 45125.1(c), representatives of FCMAT will have limited contact with District pupils. The District shall take appropriate steps to comply with EC 45125.1(c).

6. PROJECT SCHEDULE

The following schedule outlines the planned completion dates for key study milestones:


Orientation:	March 27, 2007
Staff Interviews:	March 27-29, 2007
Exit Interviews:	March 29, 2007
Preliminary Report Submitted:	May 10, 2007
Final Report Submitted:	To be determined
Board Presentation:	To be determined


7. CONTACT PERSON

Please print name of contact person: Liann Reyes, Director of Business Services

Telephone 831 438-1820, ext. 116 FAX 831 438-2314

Internet Address lreyes@santacruz.k12.ca.us

 3/14/07
 Dr. Susan Silver, Superintendent Date
 Scotts Valley Unified School District

 Mar 7, 2007
 Barbara Dean, Deputy Administrative Officer Date
 Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team

In keeping with the provisions of AB1200, the County Superintendent will be notified of this agreement between the District and FCMAT and will receive a copy of the final report.