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**Athol-Royalston Regional School District**

**TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING**

**REPORT**

**For** **Group A Universal Standards**

**Tier Level** **3**

**Dates of Onsite Visit:** **April 4-6, 2023**

**Date of Draft Report:** **April 28, 2023**

**Date of Final Report: May 30, 2023**

**Action Plan Due: June 28, 2023**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Team Members:**

**Marc Oldenburg, Chairperson**

**Alaena Podmore**



Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING REPORT**

**Athol-Royalston Regional School District**

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**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**TIERED FOCUS MONITORING REPORT**

During the 2022-2023 school year, Athol-Royalston Regional School District participated in a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review (TFM) conducted by the Department’s Office of Public School Monitoring (PSM). The purpose of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review is to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements focusing on special education and civil rights.

Each school district, charter school, vocational school, and virtual school undergoes a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review every three years. The statewide Tiered Focused Monitoring cycle is posted at <<https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/3yrcycle.html>>.

Regularly monitored standards are divided into two groups, known as Group A Universal Standards and Group B Universal Standards. Districts and schools are monitored on an alternate set of Universal Standards every three years.

Group A Universal Standards address:

* Student identification
* IEP development
* Programming and support services
* Equal opportunity

Group B Universal Standards address:

* Licensure and professional development
* Parent/student/community engagement
* Facilities and classroom observations
* Oversight
* Time and learning
* Equal access

The Department has also reserved a specific set of criteria, collectively known as Targeted Standards, employed if LEA or school level risk assessment data indicate there is a potential issue; the identified Targeted Standards are assessed in addition to the Universal Standards.

Universal Standards and Targeted Standards are aligned with the following regulations:

Special Education (SE)

* Selected requirements from the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-2004); the federal regulations promulgated under that Act at 34 CFR Part 300; M.G.L. c. 71B, and the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Special Education regulations (603 CMR 28.00), as amended September 20, 2022.

Civil Rights Methods of Administration and Other General Education Requirements (CR)

* Selected federal civil rights requirements, including requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, together with selected state requirements under M.G.L. c. 76, Section 5 as amended by Chapter 199 of the Acts of 2011 and M.G.L. c. 269 §§ 17 through 19.
* Selected requirements from the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Physical Restraint regulations (603 CMR 46.00).
* Selected requirements from the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Student Learning Time regulations (603 CMR 27.00).
* Various requirements under other federal and state laws.

**PSM Team:**

Depending upon the size of a school district and the number of special education programs to be reviewed, a team of one to four Department staff members conducts onsite activities over one to five days in a school district or charter school.

**Tier Level:**

The level of monitoring varies based on tier designation, aligning supports to the level of need and ensuring that districts and schools with greater needs receive appropriate supports to make sustained improvements.

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| Tier | Title | Description |
| 1 | Self-Directed Improvement | Data points indicate no concern on compliance and student outcomes. |
| 2 | Directed Improvement | No demonstrated risk in areas with close link to student outcomes. |
| 3 | Corrective Action | Areas of concern include both compliance and student outcomes. |
| 4 | Cross-unit Support and Corrective Action | Areas of concern have a profound effect on student outcomes and ongoing compliance. |

For the 2022-2023 school year, the tier assignments are based on:

* Annual drop-out rate for students with disabilities
* Five-year cohort graduation rate for students with disabilities
* Public School Monitoring compliance data from the previous review
* Problem Resolution System data, specifically findings of noncompliance
* Special education SPP/APR compliance Indicator data for Indicators 4B, 9 & 10
* Indicator 4B: Significant discrepancy by race or ethnicity in removal of students with IEPs greater than 10 days
* Indicator 9: Overall disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups identified as eligible for special education
* Indicator 10: Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups within specific disability categories
* Special education SPP/APR performance Indicator data for Indicators 5 & 6
* Indicator 5: Education Environments (6-21)
* Indicator 6: Preschool Environments
* Significant Disproportionality data 2021-2022 & 2022-2023

Tiering adjustments may be made for districts engaged in work with the Department’s Statewide System of Support and have schools identified as requiring assistance and intervention. Tiering assignments may also be adjusted for schools and districts unable to remedy noncompliance within one year of the previous TFM review, as well as for charter schools requiring additional oversight based on conditions of their charter.

**Report for Tier 3 & 4 Tiered Focused Monitoring Reviews**

At the end of the onsite visit, the PSM team holds an informal exit meeting with the superintendent or charter school leader to summarize the review. Within approximately 45 business days of the onsite visit, the chairperson forwards a Draft Report containing comments from the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review to the superintendent or charter school leader. The Draft Report comments for special education and civil rights are provided to the district/school on-line through the Web-based Monitoring System (WBMS). Within 10 business days of receipt of the Draft Report, the district/charter school reviews and comments on the report for factual accuracy before the publication of a Final Report with ratings and findings (see below). The Tiered Focused Monitoring Final Report will be issued within approximately 60 business days of the conclusion of the onsite visit and posted on the Department’s website at

< <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/reports/>>.

**Ratings:** In the Tiered Focused Monitoring Final Report, the onsite team gives a rating for each compliance criterion it has reviewed; those ratings are “Commendable,” “Implemented,” “Implementation in Progress,” “Partially Implemented,” “Not Implemented,” and “Not Applicable.”

The onsite team includes a comment in the Tiered Focused Monitoring Final Report for each criterion that it rates “Commendable,” “Partially Implemented,” “Not Implemented,” or “Implementation in Progress,” explaining the basis for the rating.

**Corrective Action:** Where criteria are found “Partially Implemented” or “Not Implemented,” the district or charter school must propose a corrective action plan (CAP) to bring those areas into compliance with the relevant statutes and regulations. The CAP is due to the Department within 20 business days after the issuance of the Final Report and is subject to the Department’s review and approval. Department staff provide support and assistance to districts and charter schools on the development of an approvable CAP.

Department staff also provide ongoing technical assistance as the school or district is implementing the approved CAP. **School districts and charter schools must demonstrate effective resolution of noncompliance identified by the Department as soon as possible but in no case later than one year from the issuance of the Department’s Final Tiered Focused Monitoring Report.**

For more information regarding the TFM Review Process, including district and parent resources, please visit < <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/default.html>>.

**TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING FINAL REPORT**

**Athol-Royalston Regional School District**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education conducted a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review in Athol-Royalston Regional School District during the week of April 3, 2023, to evaluate the implementation of Group A Universal Standards in the program areas of special education, civil rights, and other related general education requirements. The team appreciated the opportunity to interview staff and parents, to observe classroom facilities, and to review the programs underway in the district.

In preparing this report, the team reviewed extensive written documentation regarding the operation of the district's programs, together with information gathered by means of the following Department program review methods:

**Self-Assessment Phase:**

* District review of special education and civil rights documentation for required elements including document uploads.
* District review of a sample of special education student records selected across grade levels, disability categories, and levels of need.
* District review of student records related to the Indicator Data Collection for Indicators 11, 12, and 13.
* Upon completion of the self-assessment, the district submitted the data to the Department for review.

**On-site Phase:**

* Interviews of administrative, instructional, and support staff consistent with those criteria selected for onsite verification.
* Interviews of parent advisory council (PAC) representatives and other telephone interviews, as requested by other parents or members of the general public.
* Review of additional documents for special education and civil rights.
* Surveys of parents of students in special education: Parents of students in special education were sent a survey that solicited information regarding their experiences with the district’s implementation of special education programs, related services, and procedural requirements.
* Review of student records for special education: The Department selected a sample of student records from those the district reviewed as part of its self-assessment, as well as records chosen by the Department from the special education student roster. The onsite team conducted this review, using standard Department procedures, to determine whether procedural and programmatic requirements have been met.
* Observations of classrooms and other facilities.

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| The Tiered Focused Monitoring Report includes those criteria that were found by the team to be implemented in a “Commendable” manner, as well as criteria receiving a rating of "Partially Implemented," "Not Implemented," and “Implementation in Progress.” (Refer to the “Definition of Compliance Ratings” section of the report.) The Tiered Focused Monitoring Reports do not include criteria receiving a rating of “Implemented” or “Not Applicable.” This will allow the district and the Department to focus their efforts on those areas requiring corrective action. Districts are expected to incorporate the corrective actions into their district and school improvement plans, including their professional development plans. | | | |
| **DEFINITION OF COMPLIANCE RATINGS** | |
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| **Commendable** | Any requirement or aspect of a requirement implemented in an exemplary manner significantly beyond the requirements of law or regulation. |
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| **Implemented** | The requirement is substantially met in all important aspects. |
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| **Implementation in Progress** | This rating is used for criteria containing new or updated legal requirements; the district has implemented any old requirements contained in the criterion and is training staff or beginning to implement the new requirements in such a way that the onsite team anticipates that the new requirements will be implemented by the end of the school year. |
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| **Partially Implemented** | The requirement, in one or several important aspects, is not entirely met. |
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| **Not Implemented** | The requirement is totally or substantially not met. |
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| **Not Applicable** | The requirement does not apply to the school district or charter school. |

**Athol-Royalston Regional School District**

**SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE CRITERIA RATINGS**

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|  | **Universal Standards Special Education** | **Universal Standards Civil Rights and Other General Education Requirements** |
| **IMPLEMENTED** | SE 1, SE 2, SE 3, SE 3A, SE 6, SE 7, SE 8, SE 9, SE 9A, SE 10, SE 11, SE 12, SE 13, SE 17, SE 18A, SE 19, SE 20, SE 22, SE 25, SE 26, SE 29, SE 34, SE 35, SE 37, SE 38, SE 39, SE 40, SE 41, SE 43, SE 44, SE 45, SE 46, SE 47,  SE 48, SE 49 | CR 10C, CR 13, CR 14, CR 18 |
| **PARTIALLY**  **IMPLEMENTED** | SE 14, SE 42 |  |
| **NOT**  **IMPLEMENTED** | None |  |
| **NOT**  **APPLICABLE** | None |  |

The full list of criteria and information regarding the requirements can be found in Appendix B of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Toolkit available at < <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/resources/tfm-toolkit.docx>>.

**SUMMARY OF INDICATOR DATA REVIEW**

As part of the self-assessment process for districts undergoing a review for Group A Universal Standards, the PSM team reviewed the results of Indicator data submissions for Indicators 11, 12, and 13. The Indicator review is completed prior to the onsite visit and helps inform the scope of the onsite review. For any Indicator data noncompliance found, the district must develop and implement corrective action that includes correcting noncompliance for the individual students affected by it, addressing the root cause and underlying reasons for the identified noncompliance, and reviewing additional records as evidence that the issues have been corrected and that requirements are being met. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires correction of noncompliance within one year of the finding.

The results of the Department’s analysis regarding these Indicators are as follows:

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|  | **Compliant** | **Non-Compliant** | **Not Applicable** |
| **Indicator 11 – Initial**  **Evaluation Timelines** | X |  |  |
| **Indicator 12 – Early**  **Childhood Transition** | X |  |  |
| **Indicator 13 –**  **Secondary Transition** |  | X |  |

The district submitted evidence of corrective action, including an additional data set, to address the noncompliance identified for Indicator 13. The submissions have been reviewed and approved by the Department; no further action is required.

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| |  | | --- | | **SPECIAL EDUCATION**  **LEGAL STANDARDS,**  **COMPLIANCE RATINGS AND**  **FINDINGS** | |

| **CRITERION**  **NUMBER** |  | | | |
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|  | **Legal Standard** | | | |
| **SE 14** | Review and revision of IEPs   1. At least annually, on or before the anniversary date of the IEP, a Team meeting is held to consider the student's progress and to review, revise, or develop a new IEP or refer the student for a re-evaluation, as appropriate. 2. The IEP Team reviews and revises the IEP to address any lack of expected progress towards the annual goals and in the general curriculum. 3. Amendments to the IEP. In between annual IEP meetings the district and parent may agree to make changes to a student's IEP, documented in writing, without convening a meeting of the Team. Upon request, a parent is provided with a revised copy of the IEP with the amendments incorporated. | | | |
|  | State Requirements | | Federal Requirements | |
|  | 603 CMR 28.04(3) | | 34 CFR 300.324(a)(4), (6) and (b) | |
|  | **Rating:** | **Partially Implemented** | **District Response Required:** | **Yes** |

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| **Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Findings:** |
| *A review of student records and interviews indicated that the district does not consistently convene a Team meeting at least annually, on or before the anniversary date of the IEP, to consider the student's progress and to review, revise, or develop a new IEP or refer the student for a re-evaluation, as appropriate.* |

| **CRITERION**  **NUMBER** |  | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Legal Standard** | | | |
| **SE 42** | Programs for young children three and four years of age  General requirements:   1. The school district ensures programs are available for eligible students three and four years of age. Such programs shall be developmentally appropriate and specially designed for students ages three and four years. 2. Where appropriate, the school district elects, consistent with federal requirements, to use the format and services of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), if appropriate, for an additional year as a means of transitioning eligible students to public school services. 3. Where appropriate the Team allows a student to remain in a program designed for three- and four-year-old students for the duration of the school year in which the student turns five years old (including the summer following the date of the student's fifth birthday).   Types of Settings:   1. Inclusionary programs for young students are located in a setting that includes students with and without disabilities and meet the following standards:    1. Services in such programs are provided in the home, the public school, Head Start, or a licensed childcare setting.    2. For public school programs that integrate students with and without disabilities, the class size does not exceed 20 with 1 teacher and 1 aide and no more than 5 students with disabilities. If the number of students with disabilities is 6 or 7 then the class size does not exceed 15 students with 1 teacher and 1 aide. 2. Substantially separate programs for young students are located in a public school classroom or facility that serves primarily or solely students with disabilities. Substantially separate programs adhere to the following standards:    1. Substantially separate programs are programs in which more than 50% of the students have disabilities.    2. Substantially separate programs operated by the district limit class sizes to 9 students with 1 teacher and 1 aide. | | | |
|  | State Requirements | | Federal Requirements | |
|  | 603 CMR 28.06(7) | | 34 CFR 300.101(b);  300.124(b); 300.323(b) | |
|  | **Rating:** | **Partially Implemented** | **District Response Required:** | **Yes** |

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| **Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Findings:** |
| *A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that one preschool grouping in the district does not meet the requirements for appropriate student ratios and class size.* |

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| This Tiered Focused Monitoring Final Report is also available at:  .< <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/reports/>>.  Profile information supplied by each charter school and school district, including information for individual schools within districts, is available at  <<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>>. |

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| WBMS Final Report 05.30.2023 | |
| File Name: | Athol-Royalston Final Report |
| Last Revised on: | **05.30.23** |
| Prepared by: | GL, AM |