

Special Education State Education Review

Positive educational outcomes for all students will always be a priority for Amherst Central Schools. In an effort to better meet the needs of all of our students, the Instructional Action Plan has supported the continued involvement of an initiative regarding the topic of Culturally Responsive Teaching. Taking root during the 2003-2004 school year, significant research and planning has taken place to examine the particular challenges that African American students face in school and how that affects academic achievement, and more specifically, disproportionate outcomes along a number of domains and factors.

Consistent with national trends, we have historically found that our African American male students, in particular, have faced disproportionate outcomes in special education identification, educational placement, state test performance, and suspension. To address these concerns, Amherst Central Schools has spent the last eight years engaging in on-going, data-based reviews of policies, practices, and procedures throughout the district and has developed targeted interventions and training to both educate staff and address service provision to improve the achievement for all students in our district. As a result, we have enjoyed improved outcomes in regards to special education identification and placement, which has been reflected in annual reviews of district data.

Currently, the New York State Education Department's P-12: Office of Special Education has initiated a Special Education Quality Assurance (SEQA) Suspension Comprehensive Review. Although we have been proactive in our practices, Amherst Central Schools is being reviewed for the 2012-2013 school year due to three or more consecutive years of data that indicate a significant discrepancy in the rate of long-term suspensions of students with disabilities by race/ethnicity. The purpose of this review is to assess the district's compliance with selected federal and state laws and regulations governing the education of students with disabilities.

The review will be conducted by the P-12: Office of Special Education's SEQA Regional Office in collaboration with representatives from the school district. The review will involve an examination of school records of selected students with disabilities, classroom visitations and staff interviews. In addition, district manifestation determination team meetings may be observed.

While continuing to address the academic needs of our students, we will remain committed to improving social outcomes and disciplinary needs as we proactively address the suspension rates of our students. We welcome the assistance of the New York State Education Department in reviewing our policies, practices, and procedures as it relates to the disciplinary process for all students and look forward to the feedback we will receive.

Further information regarding this review may be obtained by contacting the SEQA Office in our region and/or by contacting the Office of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services at Amherst Central Schools.