

## Conducting Evaluations of Special Education Programs and Services is Not Only Prudent, Its the Law

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School districts are required by special education regulation to evaluate a component of their programming/services on an annual basis. Beyond the requirement, it is good practice to assess the effectiveness of the various programs and related services at all levels—early childhood, elementary, middle school and high school. Reviewing them, and analyzing organizational structure of the department, effectiveness of staffing patterns, caseloads, census, and budgets/expenditures helps to lead to best practices and more efficient use of resources across a district.



Walker Partnerships has assembled a team of exceptional and experienced former special education directors and collaborative directors that it calls on to conduct such evaluations. Walker Partnerships specializes in district wide, program specific and building based evaluations, focusing on special education. It has conducted over 250 evaluations since 2004 in all types of school districts, regional school districts and collaboratives. The aim of these evaluations is to provide districts with substantive data that will enable a director of special education to develop an action plan that addresses specific areas of needs. The analysis of census and expenditure data compared to like districts demonstrates where a district is in relationship to census of special education students and expenditures for

instructional personnel, out-of-district tuitions, and number of students in placement.

To ensure the accuracy of an evaluation, Walker Partnerships employs this thorough six-step process:

- A review of pertinent written special education documents such as census data, program and role descriptions, caseloads of individual service providers, expenditures, out-of-district enrollment, pre-referral processes, administrative procedures and practices, tiered systems of Instructional intervention, special education professional development offerings, utilization of para professionals, and comparative data with like districts and sample IEPs.
- A walk through of the schools in the district accompanied by the director and the principal of each school. This provides the evaluator with the opportunity to conduct an informal discussion with the building principal regarding special education in their building, and whether or not there are any unique issues. This enables the evaluator to gain a sense of the climate of the individual schools.
- Observation of the various special education programs and services with emphasis placed on substantially separate programs.
- One-on-one and focus group interviews with a cross-section of school based staff, both special and general education personnel as well as with parents. If desired, surveys based on the interviews can be developed and distributed throughout the district as a form of feedback.
- Report development, consisting of an introduction, methodology section, and recommendations, identifying specific strengths in programming and processes, a section on factors that affect the implementation of programming for the district, findings that pinpoint areas of need, along with recommendations. Each is followed up with a full explanation for the specific recommendations.
- School Committee presentation. if requested.



The evaluations conducted by Walker Partnerships provide school districts with a wealth of valuable knowledge. For example, the reports derived from evaluations provide very specific data that districts can use to develop action plans to best address the agreed upon recommendations. School districts also get a very clear idea of program development needs, data analysis, comparative data analysis to like districts, professional development and staffing needs, and/or reconfigurations of staffing and programming. Reports, whether district-wide, program specific or building based, also provide directors with information that will assist in moving districts or programs forward in a positive direction, and provide the support for further program development, if needed.

The results of a recent survey by Walker Partnerships speak to the value of these evaluations. The survey found 92% of respondents strongly agreeing that the program evaluation was beneficial to them and their district, while the same percentage would recommend Walker Partnerships' program evaluation services to other administrators of special education.

The recently retired Superintendent of the Weston Public Schools, expressed this regarding the evaluation Walker Partnerships conducted on behalf of the school district, "The report was clear, thorough, well-researched, balanced and well documented. It provided us with an important and valuable opportunity to reflect on our practices, so we could better focus on meeting individual student needs in different models."

Dianna Mullen, Director of Special Education, Scituate Public Schools also was pleased with the work Walker Partnerships did for her town's special education program. This is what she said about her experience, "I have turned to Walker Partnerships on two occasions. The first of which was soon after I joined the district. Being new, I wanted a full Special Education Program review to help inform us of what services were being implemented well and where we needed to focus our attention regarding programming and staffing needs. This report was very useful to me. I was able to utilize this information to inform my budgeting needs as well as my professional goals. Since receiving this comprehensive report, I was able to focus funds to a sustained training and implementation of co-teaching throughout the district."



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## About Walker Partnerships

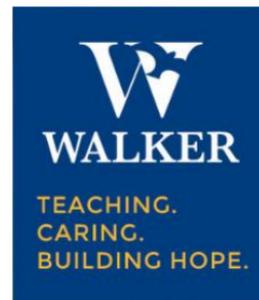
Since 1994 Walker Partnerships has been providing comprehensive services to school districts throughout Massachusetts to help them increase their capacity to include students with serious emotional disabilities. Walker Partnerships' model of service delivery focuses on increasing student participation in general education, reducing barriers, restructuring policies, teaching best practices, and shifting culture. Walker Partnerships is fully committed to finding better ways of including students who are at risk of marginalization or exclusion.

[Learn More](#)

## About Walker

Walker is a nonprofit organization that provides supportive environments for children, teens, and families through an array of academic programs and therapeutic services. Each year, Walker directly serves more than 2,000 children on the Needham and Watertown campuses, impacting an additional 33,000 children and families through trainings and consultation services.

**Learn More**



Please contact Walker Partnerships to learn more about the organization and the services it provides to assist school districts in serving their populations of students with social, emotional, behavioral needs.

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