

March 6, 2025

Ms. Ronnetta Stanley  
Loud Voices Together Educational Advocacy Group, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1178  
Temple Hills, Maryland 20748

Ms. Trinell Bowman  
Associate Superintendent-Special Education  
Prince George's County Public Schools  
John Carroll Center  
1400 Nalley Terrace  
Landover, Maryland 20785

RE: [REDACTED]  
Reference: #25-214

Dear Parties:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services, has completed the investigation of the complaint regarding special education services for the above-referenced student. This correspondence is the report on the final results of the investigation.

**ALLEGATION:**

On January 8, 2025, MSDE received a complaint from Ms. Ronnetta Stanley, hereafter “the complainant,” on behalf of the above-referenced student. In that correspondence, the complainant alleged that the Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) violated certain provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) concerning the above-referenced student.

MSDE investigated the allegation that the PGCPS did not follow proper procedures in the identification and evaluation of the student since January 23, 2024, in accordance with 34 CFR §§ 300.111 and .301-.311 and COMAR 13A.05.01.06.

**BACKGROUND:**

The student is six years old and is identified as a student with Other Health Impairment (OHI) under the IDEA. The student attends [REDACTED] School and has an IEP that requires the provision of special education instruction and related services.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

1. On January 10, 2024, while the student was in kindergarten, the student was administered an i-Ready<sup>1</sup> assessment for the middle of the year (MOY), which indicates the student performed as an

---

<sup>1</sup> iReady testing is an online, adaptive assessment used in schools to evaluate students' reading and math skills.

“Emerging Kindergartener, 356” in his overall reading, which places him “one grade below level.” This is an increased score from the beginning of the year (BOY) assessment in which his score was 283<sup>2</sup>.

2. The student received DIBELS<sup>3</sup> assessments throughout kindergarten. The student received a BOY composite score of 278, which reflected that he needs “most support”, and a MOY composite score of 337, which continued to reflect that he needs “most support.”
3. The student received an in-class DreamBox math intervention throughout kindergarten two days a week for 15 minutes each day, in which the student demonstrated average growth of 0.5 grade levels.
4. The student received an in-class reading Lexia Reading intervention throughout kindergarten for 10 to 15 minutes daily.
5. The report card for the 2023–2024 school year reflects the grades the student received, which ranged from "Emerging" and "Needs Developing" to "In Progress." It also indicates that the student was absent for 61 days during the school year.
6. The report card for the 2024–2025 school year indicates that the student is proficient in his current courses. However, he is below grade level in reading, classified as Level 1, and is marked as "Emerging" in reading. The report also shows that the student was absent for 26 days during the school year.
7. On May 29, 2024, the PGCPs issued a Notice of Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Meeting for a meeting scheduled for June 24, 2024, to review existing information and determine the need for additional data based on parent concerns and a request for assessments.
8. On June 12, 2024, the parents received a “data sheet” report for the student that presented the data from Findings of Fact (FOF) # 1 and #2. The data sheet also reflects that the student received the following supports throughout kindergarten:
  - Sentence starters
  - First then board
  - Extended Time
  - Frequent Breaks
  - Repeated directions and reminders
  - Timer
  - Token Board

The data sheet reflects that the student displayed strengths in being social, interacting with his peers in play, and collaborative activities such as movement breaks, and learning centers.

---

<sup>2</sup> The student was administered the beginning of the year iReady assessment on September 12, 2023, which is outside of the date of investigation. The data is reported to show the difference in the student’s performance.

<sup>3</sup> DIBELS is a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of literacy skills.

The data sheet reflects that the student exhibited concerns in reading (letter recognition, sound recognition, and fluency), math (composing and decomposing numbers, and addition), as well as behavior (defiance, hitting, and difficulty following directions).

The data sheet reflects the student received the following interventions in addition to FOF # 3 and #4:

- RGR Playgrounds 10 minutes 3x/week
- DIBELS intervention 1x/week,
- Alphabet decodable reader small group 1x/week

9. On June 24, 2024, the IEP team convened at the parent's request to conduct an initial evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services and support.

The prior written notice (PWN) generated after the meeting reflects the parent provided input on the student, noting that the student manages his materials and organizes his space but struggles with short-term memory due to seizures and has difficulty with sudden routine changes. His behaviors emerge when support is not readily available.

The PWN reflects the complainant, and the parent suggested the student “might qualify for a compensatory service not identified in the winter regardless of his obvious delay”, but the school team disagreed, citing the need to monitor his attendance and development due to his young age. The school noted that a member of the IEP team would verify whether the student is part of the 504<sup>4</sup> Student Intervention Team (SIT)/ Response to Intervention (RTI) process<sup>5</sup>. While the parent team requested an assessment review within 60 days, school compliance personnel clarified that the initial IEP process takes 120 days, which the school will follow.

After reviewing input from parents, teachers, outside assessments, classroom observations, and various data points, the IEP team determined that further assessments are needed to evaluate the student’s eligibility for special education services in the following areas:

- Cognitive abilities
- Academics
- Phonological processing
- Social-emotional behavior
- Teacher/parent rating scales

The parent provided consent to evaluate on the same day.

10. On August 12, 2024, the PGCPs conducted a psychological assessment and provided it to the parent, noting the teacher’s report was missing.

---

<sup>4</sup> “Section 504” refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, requiring schools to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to each eligible student, including the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services that are designed to meet the individual educational needs of the student as adequately as the needs of a student without a disability are met. (34 CFR § 104.33).

<sup>5</sup> The student was determined eligible for a Section 504 plan on October 19, 2024, due to a diagnosis of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

11. On August 18, 2024, PGCPs generated an updated psychological assessment.
12. On August 19, 2024, the IEP team convened to review the student's assessments and determine whether he meets the criteria for special education services under IDEA. The IEP team reviewed the conducted assessments, including a records review, parent questionnaire, and observation. The IEP team determined that the student qualified for special education services under IDEA with a disability code of Other Health Impairment (OHI) due to seizures, ADHD, and characteristics of dysphonetic dyslexia. The PWN reflects that during the meeting, the complainant reported that compensatory services are warranted because the student struggled throughout kindergarten, resulting in him performing well below grade level in reading. Additionally, the advocate raised potential visual concerns and inquired whether the occupational therapist should evaluate the student. The IEP team proposed reconvening on September 10, 2024, to review the IEP developed for the student.
13. On September 10, 2024, the IEP team reconvened to review the initial IEP developed for the student. The PWN reflects that the team reviewed the proposed draft, made recommendations, and determined the necessary services and support for the student.

During the meeting, the IEP team decided to follow up with an occupational therapist consultation due to visual concerns mentioned in the eligibility determination meeting on August 19, 2024. The complainant raised concerns about the need for compensatory education, asserting that evaluations should have been initiated during the 2023–2024 school year. She requested to discuss this matter further at the 45-day review meeting, which was agreed upon by the IEP team.

14. On December 17, 2024, the IEP team convened for a 45-day review of the student's progress since having an IEP. The PWN reflects the IEP team's discussion of the request for an occupational therapy (OT) assessment made by the complainant. The PGCPs OT provider noted that the student writes large but maintains good line orientation, occasionally extending below the baseline. Letter reversals, especially with "s" resembling a "5", were observed, though overall, his writing is legible. She inquired about his vision history to rule out any concerns.

The PWN reflects the occupational therapist emphasized the need to implement strategies before formal assessments, as there is currently no educational impact. She notes the student's writing is legible, he knows his letters, and direct services are not necessary at this time and recommended more practice in and outside the classroom, and if the strategies are unsuccessful, further steps can be considered at the end of the third quarter.

15. The complainant sought clarification on whether the occupational therapist's recommendations were trial strategies or would be added to the student's supplementary aids and services. The complainant also inquired if the occupational therapist would consider a convergence observation alongside fine and visual motor assessments.

Expressing concern about delaying the progress review until the end of the third quarter, the advocate noted that if assessments were deemed necessary, the 90-day timeline would extend into the next school year. Citing concerns about the student's writing legibility, they requested formal fine and visual motor assessments. Disagreeing with the occupational therapist's decision not to proceed with these assessments, the advocate stated that the parent would submit a formal request for a re-evaluation.

16. During the December 17, 2024, IEP meeting, the complainant also raised concerns about the delay in the Child Find referral and requested a discussion on compensatory services for the period of October 2023 to September 2024. A member of the IEP team noted that the team was not prepared to present an offer to the parent at this meeting.

The instructional compliance specialist stated that more time was needed to review the compensatory services timeline. The IEP team will meet to discuss the matter and follow up with the parent and advocate after the break to schedule a meeting to propose compensatory services.

17. On December 17, 2024, via email, the parents expressed concern about the student's need for an evaluation in fine motor, visual motor, and convergence skills. They explained that they had made this request during the IEP meetings in August and September 2024 and reiterated their request for a comprehensive OT assessment.
18. On January 24, 2025, the PGCPs OT provider responded to the parent's request regarding a comprehensive OT assessment, stating that after attending the student's 45-day review on December 17, 2024, and discussing his writing challenges, OT testing would not proceed at this time. Instead, strategies such as adaptive paper, highlighted lines, and golf pencils were recommended to support his writing. Additional guidance on addressing letter reversals was provided for home and classroom use. The provider stated that she would continue to monitor the student's progress and collaborate with the team, believing that with proper strategies and support, he will succeed.
19. There is no documentation that an IEP meeting has been scheduled to propose compensatory services as stated in the meeting held on December 17, 2024.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:**

### **ALLEGATION # 1**

### **CHILD FIND**

In this case, the complainant alleges that the school system was aware that the student required additional support throughout the 2023-2024 school year and should have initiated a referral under Child Find. The complainant further asserts that she has expressed concerns about the lack of a Child Find referral since June 2024. Since the school did not take this action, the complainant has requested compensatory services for the period from October 2023 to September 2024 due to the alleged Child Find delay and has not received a response regarding whether the request has been granted.

The "child find" requirements of the IDEA impose an affirmative obligation on the school system to identify, locate, and evaluate all students residing within its jurisdiction who have disabilities and need special education and related services or who are suspected of having disabilities and being in need of special education and related services. It is the intent of State and federal law that interventions and strategies be implemented to meet the needs of students within the regular school program, as appropriate, before referring students for special education services. However, the public agency must ensure that this process does not delay or deny a student's access to special education services under the IDEA (34 CFR § 300.111).

Upon receipt of a request for evaluation under the IDEA, the public agency may implement interventions within the regular school program, but the evaluation must also occur as soon as possible following the referral and within timelines required by State law (*Letter to Anonymous*, 21 IDELR 998, United States Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, 1994). When a student is referred for evaluation to determine eligibility under the IDEA, in accordance with State regulations, an IEP team must

meet to review existing data, information from the parent, instructional interventions and strategies, current classroom-based assessments, and observations by teachers and related service providers (COMAR 13A.05.01.06).

Based on the review, the IEP team must determine whether additional data is needed to determine if the student is suspected of being a student with a disability. The IEP team must complete the evaluation process within sixty days of parental consent for assessments and no more than ninety days from receipt of a written referral (COMAR 13A.05.01.06).

Based on the Findings of Fact #1 through #19, MSDE finds that the PGCPs did follow proper procedures in the identification and evaluation of the student since January 23, 2024, in accordance with 34 CFR §§ 300.111 and .301-.311 and COMAR 13A.05.01.06. Therefore, a violation did not occur.

**TIMELINES:**

As of the date of this correspondence, this Letter of Findings is considered final. This office will not reconsider the conclusions reached in this Letter of Findings unless new, previously unavailable documentation is submitted and received by this office within fifteen days of the date of this correspondence. The new documentation must support a written request for reconsideration, and the written request must include a compelling reason why the documentation was not made available during the investigation. Request for reconsideration should be sent directly to Tracy Givens, Section Chief, Dispute Resolution at [Tracy.Givens@maryland.gov](mailto:Tracy.Givens@maryland.gov).

The parties maintain the right to request mediation or to file a due process complaint if they disagree with the identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for the student, including issues subject to this State complaint investigation, consistent with the IDEA. MSDE recommends that this Letter of Findings be included with any request for mediation or a due process complaint.

Sincerely,

Antoine L. Hickman, Ed.D.  
Assistant State Superintendent  
Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services

ALH/sj

c: Millard House II, Chief Executive Officer, PGCPs  
Trinell Bowman, Associate Superintendent for Special Education, PGCPs  
Keith Marston, Compliance Instructional Supervisor, PGCPs  
Lois Jones-Smith, Compliance Liaison, PGCPs  
Darnell Henderson, General Counsel, PGCPs  
William Fields, Associate General Counsel, PGCPs  
[REDACTED], [REDACTED] School, Principal, PGCPs  
Dr. Paige Bradford, Section Chief, Performance Support and Technical Assistance, MSDE  
Dr. Brian Morrison, Branch Chief, Policy and Accountability, MSDE  
Tracy Givens, Section Chief, Dispute Resolution, MSDE  
Stephanie James, Complaint Investigator, MSDE