

**Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children
Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2007**

Members Present

Sonja	Brown
Odell	Clanton
Jana	Griggs
Sheila	Knapp
Doris	McCain
Teresa	Mebane
Terri	Meyers
Linda	Nelson
Dwight	Pearson
Bobbie	Richardson (for Gloria Uppderman)
Jill	Scercy
Andy	Thacker
Mark	Yost
Jane	Young

Members Absent

Marcy	Cooper
Linda	Jones
Shary	Maskel
Debra	McHenry
Deborah	Privette
Gloria	Upperman
Edith	Warren

Visitors

Present

Cynthia	Daniels-Hall
Eric	Hall
Laurie	Jaegers
Karen	Magoon
Lynn	Nietfeld
Lee	Williamson

DPI Staff / Presenters

Tish	Bynum
Kate	Neale
Laura	Snyder
June	St. Clair Atkinson
Mary	Watson
Ira	Wolfe

Welcome, Review of Agenda, Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Jane Young opened the meeting by welcoming members and guests. Members and guests were introduced.

After noting a few changes to the attendees on the June 20, 2007 meeting meetings, Jane Young asked the Council to review the meeting minutes. Andy Thacker made a motion to approve the June 20, 2007 meeting minutes with attendee changes. The motion was seconded by Doris McCain. The approved meeting minutes will be posted to the Council website.

Role of Literacy Consultants

Laura Snyder, Section Chief of the Professional Improvement Professional Development Section in the Exceptional Children Division, was introduced.

A handout provided for the Council was a published five-year report of the State Improvement Project (SIP). The report provides the history of the first five years of the SIP and the impact on students with disabilities.

NC applied for a second five-year SIP grant. The goal of both grants is the same: to focus on reading, writing and math; recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers; work on graduation and drop out rates; and promote parent involvement. Personnel preparation is part of the strategic plan and includes research-based strategies on what to do with struggling students. This grant actually transcends both special education and general education students.

Laura Snyder stressed that implementing SIP is as critically important as the process itself. SIP participants must complete a 30-hour training. The training is free. The training is consistent throughout the State. If a participant missed a day of training at one location, they could make up the same day of training at another location. Around day three or four of the intensive training, participants begin to “see the light” and the real impact of the program. Teachers are the critical piece of the process. Participants receive yearly visits and mandatory reviews to ensure SIP’s implementation is done correctly with integrity and is effecting outcomes for students with disabilities. Some LEAs have started requesting the training for general education teachers. Some LEAs are now beginning to have their personnel become program trainers within the LEA including general education teachers.

The first five years of SIP was focused on reading. It now includes writing and math along with a big emphasis on recruitment and retention of teachers. Since the Foundations Training began in 2000, the Division has stayed the course with consistency and implementation integrity. The Division recognized that Positive Behavior Support positively affected reading scores. So the Exceptional Children Division chose six schools to become PBS and SIP reading sites. The Division is excited about the forthcoming results of this combination.

Comments from State Superintendent June Atkinson

Mary Watson introduced and welcomed State Superintendent June St. Clair Atkinson to the Council.

Superintendent Atkinson wanted to use this opportunity to invite the Council to address 21st Century Imperatives (graduation rates, engaging technology, professional development, collaboration and revised accountability system). The imperatives align with State Board of Education goals that students will graduate high school globally competitive for the workforce. The current high school graduation rate is 64.9% which is an increase from last year. NC needs to grow at a fast pace with more growth for the exceptional children graduation rate.

The current mindset for high school graduation is that it is time-certain. In the 21st Century, NC needs to move in the direction that time is a variable. Some students may take longer than four years to graduate from high school.

NC needs to make sure every class and every student has engaging technology. In the 21st Century, NC needs to move away from technology being an instructional distraction to an instructional tool, i.e. using cell phone calendar/planner instead of paper planners. Exceptional students have many opportunities to use technology.

Professional development needs to move from exclusive professional development where only some teachers are involved to extensive where all teachers are included and the focus is centered around the child. Exceptional children and instructional strategies personnel should always be at the same table together.

Collaboration should move from teacher isolation to teacher collaboration.

Revised accountability system –The State Board of Education’s movement toward a graduation project is an effective process for students to demonstrate multiple skills. The Council is invited to make recommendations to assist exceptional children with graduation and being prepared in the 21st century.

The Commission on Testing and Accountability makes recommendations to State Board of Education. One recommendation would be to move away from process assessment, such as EOGs, to focus on outcomes. The Council applauded.

A number of other items should be considered:

- % of students graduating in three years;
- % of students meeting the requirements of admission to university system;
- % of students who can enter a Community College without remediation; and
- % of students receiving state or national recognition credentials, such as completion of Occupational Course of Study, auto technician, etc.

EOG is used to determine if student are making progress toward one or more of the four goals. End of Grade tests, Extend 1 and Extend 2 yield good information but is not sufficient for the 21st Century. No employer has ever asked an applicant their score on an EOG. Employers ask for credentials. There should be a system for writing and computing skills. A student could have an electronic portfolio to document progress. Writing tests do not reflect real-world activity. Writing of blogs and wikis is 21st century writing. It doesn’t make much sense for a student to write on paper only to have to key it on a computer.

Mary Watson asked how the Council could help promote the 21st Century Imperatives. Superintendent Atkinson recommended that the Council pay close attention to the Commission on Accountability and Testing to make sure they make accurate recommendations. They need ideas on how to correct assessments, not just to point out what is wrong. Superintendent Atkinson charged the state to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted. Make people feel uncomfortable on what they do not know about technology.

Linda Nelson informed Superintendent Atkinson that it has been her experience that schools are not giving encouragement to hard of hearing students to use technology in order to live more independently. Sometimes children do not know about basic technology available. Superintendent Atkinson responded that professional development should be required to encourage the use of technology. She is aware that DPI works directly with schools to increase exceptional children technology use and even with hard of hearing students at the schools for the deaf.

Dwight Pearson asked Superintendent Atkinson about the Virtual High School. The virtual high school is an extension of regular high school. It gives the opportunity to offer courses in school that would not be offered otherwise. The virtual high school extends learning. Currently, 6600 students are enrolled in NC’s virtual high school which is the third largest in the nation; only surpassed by Florida and Kentucky. Virtual high school allows the opportunity to take advantage of master teachers that can teach from a location other than the location of the student. Address doesn’t determine access. Students can utilize the virtual high school as a time variable opportunity. Teachers may also use the virtual high school to observe master teachers. This can be a virtual professional development learning community. NC has a good beginning with virtual high school. The General Assembly granted funds for Learn and Earn for community college and university courses online.

Report on the Indicators

The Council was provided a brochure containing an overview of the Indicators within the State Performance Plan (SPP) and the Annual Performance Report (APR). The SPP is similar to a six-year IEP with the APR being the annual re-evaluation. LEAs have developed Continuous Improvement Progress Plans that align with the SPP. Their data feeds into the state data. There is no stand alone state data per se. The SPP and APR are a huge part of the work of the Policy, Monitoring & Audit Section.

NC submitted the SPP with a determination of needs improvement. On August 21, 2007 the EC Division met with the OSEP representatives and went through each Indicator to ensure NC is coordinating its efforts toward the expectations of each Indicator.

On Indicator 16 relating to formal parent complaints issued within 60-day timeline, NC has data showing 92% with the 2006-07 data. With 2007-08 data, NC is working toward a 100% target.

On Indicator 19 relating to mediation, NC's target is 84%. For 2006-07, 83% of mediation cases reached an agreement; 71% in 2005-06. A Council member asked for an explanation of the difference between 110 mediation requests received and the 59 mediations held. Ira Wolfe, Section Chief of the Policy, Monitoring and Audit Section, advised that the parties may decide not to participate in mediation or there is a resolution of the issue(s) without having to go to mediation.

NC is proud of its Facilitated IEP program. Even though Facilitation is not required by federal law, NC offers it at no cost to either party and there is a 99% success rate of cases reaching full or partial consensus.

On Indicator 17 relating to Due Process Hearings, there were low numbers in 2005-06 for fully adjudicated cases within the 45-day timeline. There is 100% compliance in 2006-07 for meeting timelines with extension.

Based on Article 9 of NC General Statutes, the Exceptional Children Division and the Office of Administrative Hearings have developed a Memorandum of Understanding to work through concerns for special education due process cases and being in compliance with federal guidelines. NC has improved and will report this to the General Assembly's Education Committee.

Ira Wolfe will email data to the Council on Indicators 16, 17, 18 and 19 plus four more so the Council can provide feedback. The December meeting will have additional Indicators ready for Council review.

The Council was reminded that the Exceptional Children Division is required to publicly report each LEA's 2005-06 data on Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 12. This will be on the Exceptional Children Division website at the end of September and reported to the media. The Council will be copied on this notification. The LEAs' data has been generated and sent to each LEA EC Director to review with their Superintendent prior to public reporting. The Exceptional Children Division is currently receiving comments from the LEAs.

Changes to Council By-laws / Elect a Vice Chairperson

Chairperson Jane Young advised that the Council cannot vote on changes to the bylaws without a one month prior notice. Jane Young suggested the Council address the length of term for the Chairperson at the next meeting.

Also, the Council was requested to entertain a motion to nominate a Vice Chairperson. The nominee was Sonja Brown. A motion was made and seconded to elect Sonja Brown as Vice Chairperson.

The Council attention was also directed to Section II.A.3 of the bylaws regarding attendance requirements.

Agency Updates

Council members desiring to attend the 57th Conference on Exceptional Children were given instructions on how to register. Travel and lodging will be reimbursed.

Mary Watson reminded the Council of their important role and her responsibility to take the Council's recommendations and concerns to the State Board of Education. The Council members' time is appreciated and Mary hopes that Council meetings will be a priority for members.

Gloria Upperman is the new representative from Dept. of Correction; however, Bobbie Richardson is attending in her place today.

Robert Logan is the Associate Superintendent supervising the former area of Curriculum and School Reform Services. The new area is now called Office of Innovation and School Transformation, but this may be changing in the near future. Robert Logan's background includes special education.

The Exceptional Children Division is busy working on the SPP Indicators, staff development, improving outcomes for students with disabilities, and a lot of work around program improvement.

There were approximately 2,000 teachers at the Summer Institutes in June and July.

Brenda Gilchrest, VI-B grant administrator, retired September 1. The position was posted and has been filled by Valerie Herndon. Rebecca Dowless is a Charter School consultant; Marie Massengill is a Charter School monitor; Teresa Dais moved into the position of Charter School monitor for Positive Behavior Support; and Elissa Brown is the new Academically and/or Intellectually Gift consultant.

Agenda items for December:

Virtual High School

Demo of assistive technology – “active boards”

How EC did on AYP statewide

New Schools project and how they serve EC