

**Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children
Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2008**

Members Present

Sonja	Brown
Odell	Clanton
Jana	Griggs
Sally	Hunter
Cathy	Kea
Sheila	Knapp
Shary	Maskel
Doris	McCain
Jill	Scercy
Andy	Thacker
Gloria	Upperman
Mark	Yost
Jane	Young

Members Absent

Bob	Atwater
Marcy	Cooper
Esther	High
Linda	Jones
Debra	McHenry
Teresa	Mebane
Linda	Nelson
Dwight	Pearson
Deborah	Whitfield
Laura	Wiley

DPI Staff / Presenters

Kate	Neale
Laura	Snyder
Mary	Watson
Tom	Winton
Ira	Wolfe

Tish

Visitors

Present

Cynthia	Daniels-Hall
Eric	Hall
Laurie	Jaegers
Lynn	Nietfeld
June	Richardson
Ellen	Russell

Welcome, Review of Agenda, Approval of Minutes

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

A motion was made to approve the December 12, 2007 meeting minutes. Motion was seconded and the meeting minutes were approved.

Report on Service Delivery Model for Students with Visual Impairments and/or Hearing Loss

Mary Watson introduced Tom Winton, Section Chief of the Instructional Support and Related Services Section in the Exceptional Children Division.

The PowerPoint presentation, *Evaluation of Educational Services for Students with Hearing Impairments and Visual Impairments*, by Tom Winton was included in the meeting handouts. Tom wanted to advise the Council of a “disclaimer” for terminology within the title for hearing impairments. Hearing impaired is the term used by the federal

government. Hearing impaired, deaf and hard-of-hearing and hearing loss are used interchangeably within this presentation.

Legislation was passed in 2007 from an analysis of the Dept. of Health and Human Services, Office of Education Services (OES), by the Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly. OES includes a variety of State-operated programs; most notably the NC School for the Deaf in Morganton, the Eastern NC School for the Deaf in Wilson and Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh. The analysis suggested moving the administration of these schools to the Dept. of Public Instruction and this was reported to the General Assembly. DHHS in turn suggested that the entire service delivery model be looked at and how these students are being served throughout the state and the General Assembly agreed, resulting in Session Law 2007-323.

Session Law 2007-323 commissioned DHHS and DPI to do three things: collaborate on an evaluation of the current service delivery model to students with vision loss and/or hearing loss; determine if management should be transferred to DPI; and develop a plan to reduce institutional capacity to “an appropriate level.” Appropriate level is not defined. DPI and DHHS are to report their findings and recommendations back to the General Assembly by April 1, 2008. The UNC Chapel Hill School of Government was contracted with to: review how well the current model meets the federal and state legal mandates; identify the current service delivery model; give an overview of national best practices in service delivery to these students; and report what stakeholders believe is “success” in educating these students.

The Steering Committee, from DPI and DHHS, decided to contract with an outside evaluator for an unbiased opinion as well as for the enormity of the task in light of the relatively short time frame given by the General Assembly.

The results from the School of Government evaluation were that the current model meets federal and state legal mandates but there were concerns about: how well social/life skills development was being addressed; qualifications of teachers, staff and specialists; access to assistive technology and other educational resources that are important factors for success; and LRE (least restrictive environment) interpretation and implementation. The end result was a recommendation for a longer, more in-depth study.

The DHHS and DPI also collaborated to review how professional development, curriculum and assistive technology are being addressed for the visually impaired and hearing impaired populations. The review concluded that much is being done in each of these areas, both at state and local levels, but that there are gaps in knowledge about what is being offered in the LEAs for professional development and that there are needs for better assistive technology assessment resources.

Recommendations of DHHS and DPI were to establish two task forces, each with a one-year reporting date. The first would examine how FAPE (free appropriate public education) is ensured for visually impaired and hearing impaired students. In its deliberation, it would consider if other organizational structures would be more responsive to the needs of students. It would include, but not be limited to, the following considerations: the viable and necessary role of residential schools in the continuum of services; a consortium model for regional service delivery; the short-term nature of placement decisions; a review of the residential school admissions process; and an assessment of whether these considerations would satisfy the “appropriate level” clause in the statute. The second task force would be a committee of DHHS and DPI

representatives to more closely examine the administration issue. Considerations would include, but not be limited to: changing the administrative structure of the residential schools to that of a single LEA with an appointed school board reporting to DPI and the State Board of Education, similar to other LEAs; and determining if non-residential and non-day school programs associated with those schools would remain aligned within a distinct LEA or be administered in some other manner.

NC High Schools & Students with Disabilities: A Study of Educational Services and Outcomes

Laura Snyder, Section Chief of the Program Improvement Professional Development Section, was introduced and presented an overview of the study. This study was conducted with the assistance of Freda Lee and Diann Irwin. Laura advised that she would send the full report to any Council member upon their request.

The Study focused on the review of current data on high school students with disabilities (SWD) and their academic performance; review of placement data for SWD; review of focused monitoring data; review of research; and proposed recommendations.

Less than 42% of SWD scored level three or above on the 2006-07 End of Course Tests in core academic areas as opposed to non-disabled students at little above 69%. The Exceptional Children Division would like to close this gap.

In the 2006-07 school year, 51.4% of SWD spent their day in general education (regular setting); 22.4% in resource setting; 21.9% in separate setting; and 4.3% were in separate schools or homebound.

Six onsite focused monitoring visits were conducted between February 2007 and December 2007. The major points of the monitoring visits are listed below:

- ▶ Students with disabilities enter high schools with very weak academic skills.
- ▶ A full continuum of special education services is not available or not utilized at the high school level.
- ▶ Placement decisions appear to be based on the course of study and not individual student needs.
- ▶ Students with disabilities who dropped out of school had repeatedly not made progress in the general curriculum.
- ▶ More students with disabilities dropped out in the 9th and 10th grade than at any other grade level.
- ▶ Students with disabilities tend to be older than their peers when they enter high school due to being retained in elementary or middle school.
- ▶ Transition components of students' IEPs did not always contain measurable post-school outcomes goals.
- ▶ Students with disabilities missing ten or more days for one or more consecutive years are more likely to fail core academic classes and drop out of school.
- ▶ IEPs of many students had no documentation of coordination with career/technical education staff.

The eight recommendations from the Study include: provide support and sustained ongoing professional development based on the Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL); establish a general education tiered model of research-based

interventions to increase students' success in the general education environment; provide a continuum of literacy instruction for all students; expand the Positive Behavior Support initiative to all high schools; provide professional development and support for statewide implementation of co-teaching; provide a full continuum of special education services at every high school; include evidence-based programs that address dropout prevention for students with disabilities; and establish mentoring programs for students with disabilities that encourage students to enroll in post-secondary education or training.

SPP/APR Report

The State Performance Plan (SPP) is NC's six year "IEP" and the Annual Performance Report (APR) is the annual review. The APR is due every February 1. This year, some Indicators needed revisions; some Indicators needed first year baseline data; and for some previously addressed Indicators in the APR, NC had to provide updated data.

Indicators 1, 2, 13 and 14 - are clustered together for today's discussion because each relates to secondary/postsecondary outcomes of students - are they employed, seeking further education, etc.

Indicator 1 – For 2006-07 the target for graduation was 50%. The NC graduation rate was 49.4% for students with IEPs graduating with a regular diploma. This became NC's baseline data. NC also reflected five-year targets beginning with students entering ninth grade in 2002-03 with a target of 53%.

For dropout rates, the trend data was presented with 2004-05 being the baseline year; overall NC is showing an improvement in decreasing drop out rates of exceptional children.

Indicator 13 is a compliance Indicator. All compliance Indicators are required to have targets of 100%. NC was at 72.54%. We did not make the target, but we made significant improvement over the previous 60% for 2005-06.

Indicator 14 – The Council was instrumental in setting the baseline target of 75%. The baseline year for this Indicator is 2006-07 because NC looked at students graduating in 2005-06. A survey was used to gather the data for this Indicator.

Indicator 3a, b and c deal with adequate yearly progress, participation and proficiency on statewide assessments. For participation, NC met all targets and had an increase for each grade level in math and reading. For the proficiency, we had increases/progress in every area although we did not meet the targets for the specific grades.

Indicator 5 – NC has 63.2% SWD spending 80% of their time with nondisabled peers. This is an increase from 2005-06 which was 61.6%.

Indicator 7 – Preschool Outcomes – this addresses early literacy and social-behavioral skills. NC currently does not have baseline data for this Indicator, but progress data has been submitted for two years. Next school year NC will collect actual baseline data and then report on baseline data in 2010. This is a requirement of the SPP timelines.

Indicator 8 – Parent Involvement – NC submitted baseline data for the first time this year. Twenty-six percent (26%) of parents reported schools facilitated parent involvement as a means for improving services and results for children with disabilities.

NC distributed about 16,000 surveys and 972 completed surveys were returned. Approximately 2,000 surveys were returned as undeliverable. NC used the National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring (NCSEAM). The low response is attributed to incorrect addresses, families relocating and surveys returned saying children were not in EC programs. Some did not recognize speech languages as being part of the program. NC is looking at ways to improve the rate of surveys returned. The survey was 100 questions; NC will be using the 25 questions survey in the future.

Indicator 4a – Suspensions/Expulsions – NC is in the process of re-verifying LEA data for this Indicator.

Indicator 9 – Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification. No LEAs have an overall overrepresentation, but some LEAs do have overrepresentation in certain disability categories.

Indicator 10 – Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in one or more of six specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification. NC has 10.4% or 22 LEAs that have disproportionate representation in specific disability areas.

Indicator 11 – Placement Timelines - NC has 85.45% of students referred whose placement determination was made within 90 days.

Indicator 12 – Part C to B Transition – 72.27% of children referred by Part C prior to age 3, who are found eligible for Part B, and who have an IEP developed and implement by their third birthday. NC's transition went from 58% to 72.27%.

Indicators 15, 16 and 17 pertain to correction of noncompliance and timelines. Indicator 15 - 79.4% of noncompliance findings identified in 2004-05 were corrected within one year of identification. Indicator 16 - 91.67% of signed written complaints were resolved with reports issued within the 60-day timeline or a properly extended timeline. Indicator 17 - 100% of the fully adjudicated due process hearing requests were completed within the 45-day timeline or a properly extended timeline.

Indicator 18 and 19 pertain to resolution sessions and mediations. Indicator 18 has 75% of the hearing requests that went to resolution sessions being resolved with settlement agreements. Indicator 19 has 83% of the mediations held reaching agreement.

Indicator 20 – Timely and Accurate Data – 95% of State reported data (618 and Annual Performance Report) were timely and accurate.

Issues for Recommendations to the Board

Jane Young advised the Council of its responsibilities, one of the most important of which is to make recommendations to the Board to address unmet needs of children with disabilities. She pointed out that the Council acted on the position of Positive Behavior Support and Responsiveness to Intervention with the Board.

Council members discussed items of interest:

- ▶ Research about high school reform for all students with an emphasis on the dropout rate; and
- ▶ Adequacy of funding for special education. The Council wished to have information about special education versus general education funding over time and whether the proportion is remaining steady.

Agency Update

Mary Watson began by thanking everyone for their participation on the Council. Mary provided a PowerPoint of agency updates, including but not limited to:

- ▶ Continuous Improvement Plans
- ▶ Implementation of IDEA 2004 with final NC Policies being published
- ▶ Updated Parents' Rights Handbook forthcoming shortly
- ▶ New electronic EC Forms
- ▶ a Guiding Practices document as well as training modules.
- ▶ The State Improvement Grant now has 70 Reading Sites and 34 math sites. This is research-based foundation reading, writing and math training, program training, fidelity checks, coaching and developmental reviews. NC continues to build capacity with a very strategic process.
- ▶ An update regarding the expansion of RtI in NC. RtI being the philosophy and IC-T being one model available to LEAs.
- ▶ AIG updates-plans completed and reviewed; new AIG coordinator training, and AIG professional development.

Mary reminded everyone about the 2008 Governor's School sessions and about the upcoming Summer Institutes. The EC Directors' Summer Institute is August 4-5 in Greensboro.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and the meeting adjourned.