

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**Title:** Legislative Update on Evaluation of Services to Students with Hearing and/or Visual Impairments**Type of Executive Summary:**

Action Action on First Reading Discussion Information

Policy Implications:

- Constitution _____
 General Statute # _____
 SBE Policy # _____
 SBE Policy Amendment
 SBE Policy (New)
 APA # _____
 APA Amendment
 APA (New)
 Other Session Law 2007-323 (Section 10.20)

Presenter(s): Ms. Angela Quick (Deputy Chief Academic Officer, Curriculum, Instruction, Technology and Accountability Services) and Mrs. Mary N. Watson (Director, Exceptional Children Division)

Description:

The General Assembly, through Session Law 2007-323 (Section 10.20) and in response to a study conducted by its Fiscal Research Division, directed the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to 1) conduct an evaluation of the State's service delivery model for deaf and blind students, 2) determine whether the schools for the deaf and blind should remain under DHHS management or be transferred to DPI, and 3) develop a plan to reduce institutional capacity to an appropriate level. The Departments conducted an evaluation and reported in April 2008 that more time was required to fully examine these matters. Recommendations included forming two committees - one to examine the issue of residential schools governance/administration, and the other to examine how a free appropriate public education (FAPE) can be ensured for students with vision loss and/or hearing loss. The attached report is a follow-up to these recommendations.

The Departments formed these committees and examined the issues presented. The Governance Committee deliberated on the issues of direct management of the residential schools (i.e., North Carolina School for the Deaf, Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf, and the Governor Morehead School for the Blind) and that of non-residential and non-day school programs (i.e., Governor Morehead Preschool, Early Intervention Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Governor Morehead School Outreach Program, and the Resource Support Program). It arrived at a recommendation that the overall administration of the residential schools should remain with DHHS, noting that there are no identified cost savings with a transfer to DPI and such may, in fact, increase costs due to the need to establish an administrative office within DPI. DHHS already has this office (Office of Education Services, or OES) which serves many other State-operated educational programs (see Attachment C). It also concluded that the early childhood programs should also remain under DHHS, as this mirrors other same-age programs administered by DHHS divisions. Finally, it concluded that the school-age outreach programs should be transferred to DPI, as the functions of these programs closely align with and complement the monitoring, support and technical assistance currently provided by the Exceptional Children Division.

The FAPE Committee examined many issues, most notably the ability of local educational agencies (LEAs) throughout the state to provide the wide array of special education, related services and placement options required by federal and state special education laws and regulations. Many LEAs reported capacity for fully providing all necessary services to these low-incidence populations, while others expressed some difficulty. The committee developed a proposed model for LEA-hosted/LEA-administered programs to serve multi-LEA areas, with additional support and resources from DPI and DHHS. The proposed model was shared with LEA Exceptional Children Directors in meetings throughout the state. More than sixty-five percent (65%) indicated interest in participating in such a model. The FAPE Committee proposes moving forward with establishing pilot regional programs. It states that this could build local and regional capacity that would, in turn, reduce institutional capacity to an appropriate level, as required by the legislative directive.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT
2009 UPDATE

EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO STUDENTS
WITH HEARING AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

MAY 12, 2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2006, the General Assembly directed its Fiscal Research Division to complete a Zero-Based Budget analysis of five state divisions. Among the divisions chosen was the Office of Education Services in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The analysis focused on the three residential schools, managed by the Office of Education Services, serving students who have hearing and/or visual impairments. The Fiscal Research report suggested moving the administration of the residential schools for the deaf and blind to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and developing a plan to reduce institutional capacity in those schools.

Both the DHHS and the DPI were given the opportunity to respond to the report from the Fiscal Research Division. One of the recommendations by the DHHS was that further study be conducted to evaluate the entire state delivery model for serving students with visual impairments and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Subsequent legislation reflected this recommendation and included provisions requiring a review of "the training needs of professional staff, access to assistive technology and curriculum content."

Session Law 2007-323, Section 10.20, directed the DHHS and the DPI to collaborate in an evaluation of the service delivery model for deaf and blind students, including special needs of the students resulting from additional disabilities other than hearing and visual impairments, the training needs of professional staff, access to assistive technology, and curriculum content. The legislation further required the Departments to determine the appropriate administrative management of the State's schools for the deaf and blind and develop a plan to reduce institutional capacity. The Office of Education Services and the Exceptional Children Division in the DPI were charged with this task.

Staffs from the Office of Education Services and the Exceptional Children Division worked together to research and summarize the information gathered on professional development, curriculum content, and assistive technology. However, a more in-depth analysis of the topics is needed to determine where all the resources are housed, how they are used, and the emerging technologies that need to be made available to hearing and visually impaired students in North Carolina.

Two recommendations were made by the DHHS and the DPI at the conclusion of the April 15, 2008, report.

- DHHS and DPI should establish a task force, with a one-year reporting date, to examine how a free and appropriate public education is ensured for hearing and visually impaired children throughout North Carolina. This committee should determine whether other organizational considerations would be more responsive to the continuing educational needs of these populations. Also, efforts in North Carolina relative to the *National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities* and *National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Goals for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students* should inform the deliberations of this committee. Considerations in this examination should include, but not be limited to, the following.
 - To recognize the State's schools for the deaf and blind as viable and necessary components in the continuum of placement options for serving these students;
 - To establish a Local Education Agency (LEA)-hosted and LEA-administered consortium model for regional service delivery through which a fuller continuum of placement options could be considered and provided in regions where this continuum and services are not readily available;

- To more clearly recognize that all educational placement options are inherently short-term in nature and should be thoroughly and frequently reviewed by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team;
 - To review the admissions processes at the State's schools for the deaf and blind so they are transparent and obvious to all concerned parties and fully involve LEAs and parents;
 - To assess whether these and/or other considerations, if implemented, would satisfy the legislative mandate to develop a plan to reduce institutional capacity to an appropriate level for meeting the needs of these students.
- DHHS and DPI recommend establishing an administrative committee to examine and make recommendations to the two departments regarding the issue of administration of the State's schools for the deaf and blind. Considerations in this examination should include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - To change the administrative structure of the State's schools for the deaf and blind to that of a single independent LEA functioning as charter schools currently do, including providing yearly reports to DPI and the State Board of Education.
 - To determine how other non-residential and non-day school programs currently affiliated with the State's schools for the deaf and blind (e.g., Outreach, Preschool, etc.) can continue to be provided in an effective and efficient manner.

The update that follows addresses each of these points and outlines the data collection process and the analysis of that data.

FAPE TASK FORCE UPDATE

The Office of Education Services in the DHHS and the Exceptional Children Division in the DPI recommended that these agencies establish a task force, with a one-year reporting date, to examine how a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is ensured for deaf and hard of hearing, deaf-blind and visually impaired children throughout North Carolina. This committee would determine whether other organizational considerations would be more responsive to the continuing educational needs of these populations. Also, efforts in North Carolina relative to the *National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities* and *National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Goals for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students* should inform the deliberations of this committee.

- Kathy Rhoades, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Education Services, DHHS, Co-Chair
- Tom Winton, Section Chief for Instructional Support and Related Services, Exceptional Children Division, DPI, Co-Chair
- Chris Jones, Deaf Blind contracted Consultant, Exceptional Children Division, DPI
- Julie Kagy, Visual Impairment and Assistive Technology Consultant, Exceptional Children Division, DPI
- Dr. Linda Lindsey, Director of Staff Development and Special Projects, Office of Education Services, DHHS
- Dr. Keri Lohmeier, Visual Impairment Consultant, Office of Education Services, DHHS
- Michele Neal, Resource Support Program Specialist, Office of Education Services, DHHS
- Dr. Rachael Ragin, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consultant, Exceptional Children Division, DPI

The updates below are organized by the bullet points in the recommendations and reflect the activities through February 28, 2009. Many activities are ongoing and are noted as such in the relative bullet points.

- **To recognize the State's schools for the deaf and blind as viable and necessary components in the continuum of placement options for serving these students**

Relevant Actions and Information:

- The Federal Regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act states that, "Each public agency must ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services. The continuum...must 1) include the alternative placements listed in the definition under § 300.38 (instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions); and 2) make provision for supplementary services (such as resource room or itinerant instruction) to be provided in conjunction with regular class placement. (§ 300.115)."
- North Carolina's *Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities* has identical language for LEAs in NCGS 1501-3.2.
- North Carolina, according to federal and state law, must provide a residential component for the continuum of services for students with low incidence disabilities. If the state does not have the capacity for the services, it will have to look to the facilities of other states and the cost associated to have our students admitted to the appropriate residential placement in another state.

- **To establish an LEA-hosted and LEA-administered consortium model for regional service delivery through which a fuller continuum of placement options could be considered and provided in regions where this continuum and services are not readily available**

Relevant Actions and Information:

- FAPE Task Force participants studied the evaluation completed in 2007 and determined that some areas of the state (e.g., rural and/or low wealth) often have limited placement options available.
- In December 2008, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) conducted a training entitled "Meeting the Needs of Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in North Carolina" and highlighted service delivery models throughout the country. Participants (i.e., parents, teachers, exceptional children directors, related service providers, etc.) and NASDSE presenters agreed that pursuing new collaborative placement options would help address service needs, provide more choices for children and families, and allow for more efficient and effective use of state and local resources.
- Task Force participants collaborated to create a conceptual model (Attachment A) to share with LEA representatives from across the state. This model would be customized to the needs of collaborative LEAs and likely would not involve LEAs that already have the capacity to offer a fuller continuum of placement options.
- Task Force co-chairs presented to LEA Exceptional Children Program Directors in several meetings across the state (Attachment B). Many respondents expressed difficulty in accessing special education, related services (e.g., orientation & mobility, audiology) and/or supplementary aids and services (e.g., braille, interpreting) for these populations. Sixty-eight percent (68%; 32 of 47) of respondents said they would benefit from the proposed collaborative model and expressed a willingness to explore participation in collaboration.

- **To more clearly recognize that all educational placement options are inherently short-term in nature and should be thoroughly and frequently reviewed by the IEP team**

Relevant Actions and Information:

- Task Force participants reviewed the evaluation report from 2007 and determined that professional development is required to promote increased understanding about "least restrictive environment" (LRE) and the process in making placement decisions. This will take place in conjunction with the Exceptional Children Division's *Guiding Practices* document which is being developed and distributed throughout the state.
- North Carolina General Statute 115C – 106.2 states that its purpose is to "ensure that all children with disabilities ages three through 21 who reside in this State have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepares them for further education, employment, and independent living." Along with federal regulations and state policies, this states that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) should be developed to address all educational needs (i.e., academic, developmental and functional), not just progress in regular academic courses. These other educational needs (e.g., orientation and mobility, technology, independent living, communication, vocational preparedness, etc.) are delineated in the aforementioned *National Agenda* documents. Only when IEPs are properly developed can placement decisions be appropriately made. Placement decisions, by statute, are then to be determined at least annually by the IEP Team.

- **To review the admissions processes at the State's schools for the deaf and blind so they are transparent and obvious to all concerned parties and fully involve Local Education Agencies and parents**

Relevant Actions and Information:

- The Memorandum of Agreement between DPI and DHHS regarding placement of students has been revised and updated this year.
 - At the residential schools, policies and processes have been reviewed and amended to reflect that all placement decisions are solely the responsibility of the IEP Team.
 - The Office of Education Services is working with the staff at the residential schools as well as Exceptional Children's Directors in the LEAs so that everyone understands the new policies and procedures so that the movement of children in and out of the residential schools is a clear and open process, understandable to all.
- **To assess whether these and/or other considerations, if implemented, would satisfy the legislative mandate to develop a plan to reduce institutional capacity to an appropriate level for meeting the needs of these students**

Relevant Actions and Information:

- If additional placement options are in place, decisions can be made based on a continuum, not merely a system of extremes (i.e., relatively sparse services available at a local school versus residential placement, the most restrictive). Resources can be reallocated to address these new options and meet the varied needs of students. At that point, institutional capacity could be defended as being at an appropriate level because it would be responding genuinely to the needs of individual students, not to the lack of other placement options.

The FAPE Task Force is continuing to work with the LEAs and the residential schools to develop the collaborative partnerships in which some LEA is interested. Using the resources of the LEAs, DPI, and DHHS, the goal for the 2009-2010 is to establish two or three collaboratives in various areas of the state as pilots to see how well students can be served through this model in North Carolina. In addition, DHHS will continue to partner with DPI to assist in developing materials and professional development for professionals related to the education of children with low incidence disabilities.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

In its April 2008 report to the General Assembly, DHHS and DPI recommended establishing an administrative committee to examine and make recommendations to the two departments regarding the issue of administration of the State's schools for the deaf and blind. In addressing this issue, the committee worked to answer two major questions and a variety of sub-questions.

- **Should consideration be given to transferring direct management of the State's schools for the deaf and blind from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Public Instruction?**
- **How can other non-residential and non-day school programs currently affiliated with the State's schools for the deaf and blind (e.g., Outreach, Preschool, etc.) continue to be provided in an effective and efficient manner?**

The committee appointed to this task included:

- J.B. Buxton, former Deputy State Superintendent, DPI
- Angela Quick, Deputy Chief Academic Officer, DPI
- Jackie Sheppard, Assistant Secretary, DHHS
- Dwight Pearson, Superintendent of the Office of Education Services, DHHS

The committee in its deliberation decided not to address the issue of whether to change the administrative structure of the State's schools for the deaf and blind to that of a single independent Local Education Agency functioning as charter schools currently do, including providing yearly reports to DPI and the State Board of Education. It concluded that such an arrangement was probably not advisable and could ultimately result in the creation of a quasi-governmental unit that is outside the scope of the existing parameters for providing public education to students in the State. Instead, the committee sought to address the questions presented in sections 1 and 2 below.

Section 1

Should consideration be given to transferring direct oversight of the State's schools for the deaf and blind from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Public Instruction?

During the course of its deliberations, the administrative committee from DHHS and DPI, charged with the task of making recommendations to the two departments regarding the continuing management of the State-operated residential schools serving deaf and blind students, examined the issue of whether these schools should continue under DHHS management or be transferred to DPI. In reaching a consensus regarding this issue, the committee conducted a qualitative analysis and examined a variety of variables to inform its deliberations. Among these were:

- **The current operational model used in the management of the State residential schools serving deaf and blind students;**

- The logic behind the operation of public education programs by DHHS;
- Cost implications of transferring management of the State residential schools from DHHS to DPI;
- The existing organizational structures within DHHS and DPI necessary for the direct management residential schools; and
- Programmatic implications of transferring management of the residential schools from DHHS to DPI.

The current operational model used in the management of the State residential schools serving deaf and blind students

Historically, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has operated the residential schools for the deaf and blind in the State. Prior to centralization of education services under one office within DHHS during the late 1990s, this function was under the purview of the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Division of Services for the Blind, other divisions within DHHS.

While DHHS currently operates the three residential schools for the deaf and blind in the State, it has been clear in North Carolina since adoption of the 1971 constitution that the State Board of Education has jurisdiction for all public education in North Carolina, including the residential schools operated by DHHS as well as other State-operated programs.

Emphasis on the operation of the residential schools as public education entities was reinforced by the General Assembly in 2001 with the creation of the Office of Education Services within the DHHS. As stated in this legislation, "the purpose of this office is management of the schools for the deaf and blind, and their preschool components."

Recognizing the significance of addressing educational concerns in the residential schools, the legislation further required that the Office of Education Services focus on improving post secondary outcomes for students. In response to the mandate by the General Assembly, the Office of Education Services and the three residential schools are now managed by a Superintendent and educational administrative staff with significant experience working in LEAs in North Carolina.

The Office of Education Services, while functioning under the supervision of DHHS, complies with applicable policies of the State Board of Education and is organized in the general fashion of other LEAs in the State. Through extensive collaboration with DPI and other LEAs, the residential schools supervised by the Office of Education Services are required to teach the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and participate in the State Accountability Program.

The logic behind the operation of public education programs by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

The committee examined the logic behind the current governance structure for providing oversight of the State residential schools under the umbrella of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. As noted previously, this arrangement is rooted in history and the educational function was considered a responsibility of the divisions within DHHS serving deaf and blind populations in the State. Over the past thirty-five years, there has been an increased emphasis through federal and state laws, regulations and policies for children with disabilities, including those with vision loss and/or hearing loss, to

be educated in regular public schools with their nondisabled peers. While this is a positive move for most children, there are some for whom the regular public school cannot satisfactorily meet their educational needs in at least some point in their educational careers. It is these cases for which the residential school remains a viable and necessary option. As these schools serve students from throughout North Carolina, they require administration that can provide a statewide perspective, not just familiarity with the local area where the residential schools are located.

While the State residential schools continue to serve deaf and visually impaired students, the prevalence of the single disability of deafness or blindness is no longer the norm among the population served. Instead, a significant majority of these children have multiple disabilities requiring therapeutic as well as academic services as part of their educational experience.

As late as the 1990s, the majority of students attending the State residential schools were primarily either deaf, hard-of-hearing or visually impaired. However, during the early years of the current decade, the population dynamics of these schools started to evolve with the increasing prevalence of disabilities other than deafness or blindness. While this trend also holds true for LEAs, it is this group of students for whom they sometimes find difficulty in satisfactorily meeting educational needs and for whom alternative placement options (e.g., residential schools) have been found to be helpful.

Currently, the majority of students attending the schools have multiple disabilities and thus require specialized instruction and a variety of health, social and related services in order to receive full benefit of the educational opportunities afforded them. As of March 2009, in addition to a sensory impairment, most of the students have additional disabilities, a mental health diagnosis, and/or take medication for a mental health diagnosis for which they receive school-based mental health services. This includes 90% of the students enrolled at the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf in Wilson, 83% of students attending the North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton and 58% of the students at the Governor Morehead School.

It is also interesting to observe that the State agencies responsible for providing services to these students (mental health, public health, social services, etc.) are also located in DHHS and have established relationships with the population of children now served in the residential schools.

Cost implications of transferring management of the State residential schools from DHHS to DPI

The Department of Health and Human Services provides management oversight of the State residential schools for deaf and blind students through the Office of Education Services. This office currently functions as the central educational authority for the DHHS LEA, operates the residential schools and provides educational oversight to the other educational programs and licensed teachers in DHHS.

Attachment D in the appendices illustrates the conceptual framework for the entire DHHS educational program. It should be noted that even if management of the residential schools were to be transferred out of DHHS, the department would continue to require an administrative structure to manage its remaining educational services.

In addition, providing centralized administration for the State residential schools will be necessary regardless of where they are located organizationally. While the Office of Education Services in DHHS currently exists as an organizational structure designed for the direct operation of residential schools, a similar structure does not exist in DPI. Yet, the continuing operations of these schools will require

appropriate administrative oversight and support, thus requiring that DPI develop an understanding of the complexity of operating residential programs. This would require DPI to establish an office or division designed to actually carry out the administrative functions for the residential schools. This means that there may be no cost savings created by moving the residential schools to DPI because of the need for that agency to establish a structure for the management of these facilities.

The existing organizational structure within the two agencies necessary for the direct management of the residential schools

The Department of Public Instruction is the State education agency. As such, it regulates the school systems in North Carolina and mandates that they follow certain policies, procedures, State and Federal laws, and other mandates. It provides regulatory oversight to, not direct administration of, the Public Schools of North Carolina, including many aspects of State-operated educational programs. It may not be wise for the agency that provides regulatory monitoring of a school to also be responsible for its administration. The distance, perspective and objectivity required for overseeing these programs could be jeopardized if DPI also had to administer them.

Programmatic implications of transferring management of the residential schools from DHHS to DPI

The committee could not find compelling evidence to suggest that transferring governance of the residential schools from DHHS to DPI will potentially result in programmatic improvements. As noted previously, education services within DHHS are organized and managed in a manner comparable to other LEAs in the State. Based on earlier directions from the General Assembly, education services in DHHS are led by career educators and there currently exists extensive collaboration with DPI to ensure that curricula and accountability standards are maintained. This includes provisions for the implementation and monitoring of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and participation in the State Accountability Program.

Section 2

How can other non-residential and non-day school programs currently affiliated with the State's schools for the deaf and blind (e.g., Outreach, Preschool, etc.) continue to be provided in an effective and efficient manner?

As currently structured, the Office of Education Services provides a host of services to educational programs in the Department of Health and Human Services through its function as the central office for the DHHS LEA (see Attachment C). Because of this function, DHHS will need to provide management support and oversight for educational programs in the department even if the residential schools are transferred elsewhere.

As a minimum, an office or division should be maintained to monitor licensure for teachers and provide educational support for children served in other educational programs in DHHS. This office or division should directly manage:

- **Early Intervention Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**
- **The Governor Morehead Preschool Program**

These programs generally serve children with vision and/or hearing loss from birth through two years of age. Similar programs are also administered by this agency, most notably the Children's Developmental Services Agencies (CDSAs) by the Early Intervention Branch in the Women's and Children's Health Section of the DHHS Division of Public Health. These programs can continue to provide excellent service throughout the state, collaborate with other providers in the CDSAs, and promote and facilitate effective transitions to school-based services at age three.

The remaining non-residential and non-day school programs currently affiliated can be provided in the most effective and efficient manner by transitioning to be directly affiliated with DPI. These programs as described in greater detail below include:

- **The Governor Morehead School Outreach Program, and**
- **The Resource Support Program**

The Governor Morehead School (GMS) Outreach Program provides services to professionals in public school systems across NC to build capacity in LEAs to serve blind and visually impaired students

- This program was originally created to provide direct instructional services related to the acquisition of Braille.
- The program's directives have changed and now provide non-instructional services such as assessments of functional vision, media, environments; consultation related to assistive technology; demonstration teaching; professional development for professionals especially related to the Expanded Core Curriculum; and assistance with IEP goals.
- The itinerant teachers who deliver these services have experience in public school settings and are qualified to provide this consultation. They do not, however, have the close working relationship with DPI to speak authoritatively on compliance and policy-related issues.
- These teachers would be able to help coordinate, enhance and complement the statewide services currently provided the one DPI-employed State Consultant for Visually Impaired and Assistive Technology.
- Short-term programs, also a current component of the GMS Outreach Program, could be reassigned to residential school staff as an alternative placement option that GMS provides, as referenced in the FAPE section of this document.
- These teachers, who have been based in various regions of the state, could help promote the development of regionally-based educational programs for visually impaired students as noted in the FAPE section of this document.

The Resource Support Program provides services to professionals and families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing

- This program was created when the preschool programs were moved out of the residential schools for the deaf to ensure that LEAs across the State were provided assistance in building the capacity of their professional staff to serve this influx of children from ages three to five using all communication modalities and new technologies such as cochlear implants.
- What has been learned is that LEAs continue to need assistance with building capacity among their professional staff to serve all their deaf or hard of hearing children due to issues related to recruitment and retention, especially in rural areas.

- This network of professionals can partner with LEAs to help the local teachers and staff learn to provide instruction in all communication modalities, except that they do not currently have the close working relationship with DPI to speak authoritatively on compliance and policy-related issues.
- Direct affiliation with DPI would promote compliant and objective consultation, assessment, demonstration, and feedback. The Exceptional Children Division in DPI regularly provides monitoring, guidance and technical assistance on a wide variety of topics, including services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- The Resource Support Program professionals would be able to help coordinate, enhance and complement the statewide services currently provided the one DPI-employed State Consultant for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Audiology.
- These professionals could help promote the development of regionally-based educational programs for deaf and hard of hearing students as noted in the FAPE section of this document.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

In its examination, the committee could not find convincing evidence that transferring management of the State residential schools serving deaf and blind students will actually result in a better model than that which currently exists. The schools already function as part of a program designed based on a traditional LEA model to provide expanded educational services to students from birth through age twenty-one.

It is clear that all of public education in North Carolina is under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education. Therefore the real question is whether the residential schools should continue to be managed by DHHS or transferred to DPI.

There does not appear to be any administrative cost savings to be realized by transferring these schools from one agency to the other. In fact, the costs could potentially increase because of the need to continue to maintain an administrative structure in DHHS to manage other educational services even if the residential schools are transferred.

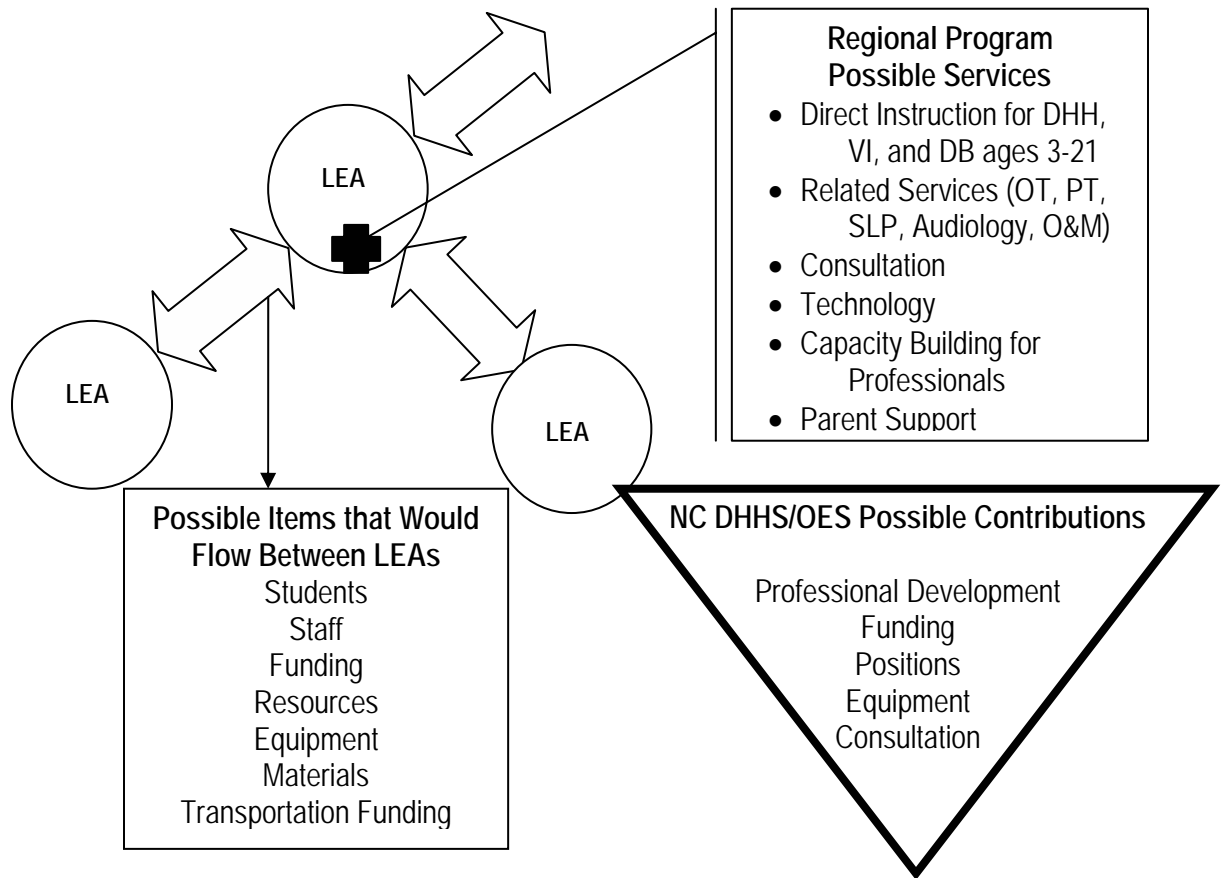
Therefore, the following recommendations are presented for consideration:

- DHHS should continue to provide management and oversight of the State residential schools serving deaf and blind students;
- Along with other State-operated programs, DHHS should provide yearly updates on progress made in addressing educational outcomes to the State Board of Education for students enrolled in the schools that it manages;
- Management of services for the Early Intervention Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and the Governor Morehead Preschool should be maintained in DHHS; and
- The remaining non-residential and non-day school programs currently affiliated with the State's schools for the deaf and blind should collaborate routinely with DPI to ensure consistency of message in providing services to LEAs.

APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT A

Proposed Model for Regional DHH, VI, and DB Programs



Note: This model is a draft and only shows a proposal for regional programs. Placement decisions for individual students should include the full continuum of options, ranging from regular classroom through residential programs.

ATTACHMENT B

Questions Regarding Regional Programs for Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Visually Impaired, and Deaf/Blind Services for Students, Families, and Professionals

Please answer the following questions as candidly as possible. This is for information gathering purposes only and will not be used to identify particular LEAs for any purpose other than those LEAs that may want to participate in exploring regional centers in their area. Please feel free to use the space on the back.

What levels of services on the special education continuum (e.g., Consultation, General Skills, Targeted Skills, Sustained Support, Intensive Needs, etc.) does your LEA currently provide for DHH, VI, and DB?

What related services does your LEA currently provide for DHH, VI and DB?

What do the DHH, VI, and DB children in your LEA need?

What could your LEA commit to a regional program?

What would your LEA need from a regional program?

How many students in your LEA would benefit from a regional program? Please specify by disability area.

_____DHH ___VI _____DB

Is your LEA willing to explore participation in a regional program?

_____ YES _____NO _____I am unsure but will let you know.

Name _____ Title _____

LEA _____

ATTACHMENT C
The Office of Education Services
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

OES serves as the central office for all of the educational programs in the Department of Health and Human Services. OES is primarily responsible for the two North Carolina Schools for the Deaf, Governor Morehead School for the Blind, and the Early Intervention Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, and the Resource Support Program.

In addition to these programs, there are ten mental health facilities that offer services to children and adolescents as part of their treatment program.

Developmental Disability Centers

- J Iverson Riddle Center
- Murdoch Center
 - PATH (Partners in Autism Treatment and Habilitation), BART (Behaviorally Advanced Residential Treatment), STARS (Specialized Treatment for Adolescents in a Residential Setting)
- O'Berry Center
- Caswell Center

Psychiatric Hospital Schools for Children and Adolescents

- Enola School at Broughton Hospital
- Pine Valley and Bowling Green Schools at John Umstead Hospital
- Spring Hill School at Dorothea Dix Hospital
- Riverbend School at Cherry Hospital

Mental Health Residential Schools for Children and Adolescents

- Wright School
- Whitaker School

OES Supports MH/DD/SAS Educational Facilities by

- Handling licensure, career status, and experience credit for licensed educators, more than 65% of whom have at least two licensure areas
- Approving and training mentors to provide beginning teacher support
- Training and monitoring on Exceptional Children's policies
- Monitoring and updating teacher and school administrator evaluation systems
- Creating and presenting instructional staff development modules that meet the unique needs of teachers and students
- Providing updated information on accountability as need by each facility
- Coordinating December 1 Headcount and June 30 End of The Year Report
- Reviewing technology plans for facilities that receive E-rate funding
- Assisting with human resource issues that involve educators
- Facilitating teachers' access to educational supports from NCDPI
- Providing technical assistance to teachers pursuing National Board Certification
- Assisting with Curriculum Design and Gateway Reviews
- Writing and managing Combined Grants (LEA System Grants)
- Providing access to web based Curriculum
- Training and provide support for the Comprehensive Exceptional Children Accountability System (CECAS) and the Continuous Improvement Performance Plan (CIPPS)
- Reviewing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

ATTACHMENT D
NC Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Education Services

