

State Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities Minutes

The Arkansas Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities met in the Conference Room at the Victory Building, Suite 445, on Tuesday, October 18, 2022.

Council Members Present:

Dr. Marcella Dalla Rosa
Teresa Hendrix
Dr. Gregory Hodges
Darlene Owens for Joseph Baxter
Sherry Rogers

Special Education Staff Present:

Jeff Adams
Becky Bell
Crystal Bethea
Bonnie Boaz
Josh Hart
Laura McCammon
Rick Porter
Rhonda Saunders
Matt Sewell
Robin Stripling
Michelle Waldo

The meeting began at 10:11 a.m. with Ms. Teresa Hendrix, called the Council meeting to order. Ms. Hendrix welcomed the Advisory Council members and Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education (DESE-OSE) staff to the meeting. Mr. Matt Sewell, Director of Special Programs for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education, introduced the newest staff members.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

There was no quorum; therefore, no action was taken on the minutes from July 19, 2022.

Ms. Danita Pitts, Early Childhood 619 Program Coordinator for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education, shared highlights on Building Arkansas Strong through Inclusive Classrooms (BASIC Professional Learning and Coaching Project): BASIC Skills for Quality Inclusion.

Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outlines requirements for provision of special education services for children from 3 to 21 years of age. For the three- to five-year-old population, Arkansas school districts are required to locate, identify, and provide services for eligible children residing within the school district boundaries. Some of these children are seen on district campuses while others are in community-based preschool/childcare programs. These services can be provided by the school district themselves or the district can choose to contract with an educational cooperative to provide those services on behalf of the district; however, the district is responsible for providing FAPE to these children.

To follow expectations outlined in IDEA and to align with the school-age inclusion project, Early Childhood Special Education has partnered with the University of Denver Project Early Learning Experiences to provide professional learning and coaching for select programs. The Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion tools and strategies used in the program are a joint effort between two Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded technical assistance centers – the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center and the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. Classrooms were chosen based on application and will serve as lab classrooms for early childhood inclusion upon completion of the project.

The project began last year with three classrooms and will continue with these programs for another year. Three additional classrooms were added this year, as well as, allowing the three programs from last year add an additional classroom to the project. This brings a total of nine classrooms currently being supported through the BASIC Project.

The project includes:

- Two days of training prior to school starting
- Monthly on-site coaching from DESE ECSE staff
- Monthly virtual collaborative meetings between regular classroom staff, early childhood special education staff, DESE coaches and University of Denver staff
- One day at the end of the year to reflect and plan for the following year

To further enhance the discussion around inclusion, and to support staff not chosen to participate in the project, the DESE staff has also offered an inclusion professional learning opportunity, Pivotal Practices in Itinerant Inclusion for all early childhood special education staff members in the state. An Inclusion Community of Practice has also been implemented monthly to troubleshoot problems arising in the field and to offer staff an opportunity to meet and collaborate with other professionals in the field.

Ms. Becky Bell and Ms. Laura McCammon, State Education Advisors for Monitoring and Program Effectiveness of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education, gave an overview of the Learning for All: Executive Function Supports for Students training that was presented during the Summer of 2022 and is ongoing by request. Ms. Becky and Ms. Laura presented Peg Dawson's model of eleven executive function skills that underlie school success. This model includes six foundational executive function skills (emotional control, working memory, response inhibition, flexibility, sustained attention and task initiation) and five advanced skills (planning & prioritization, organization, time management, goal-directed persistence, and metacognition). Council members learned about brain development with regard to executive function and the importance of reframing thinking from a traditional educator lens, which might see behaviors as a character flaw, versus viewing from an executive function lens, in which behaviors could be viewed as executive function skill deficits. The training was framed using a multi-tiered, system-of-support model to increase practitioners' capacities in aligning student self-assessments that identify possible executive functioning deficits to research-based strategies that develop good executive function skills.

Mr. Matt Sewell, Director of Special Programs for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education, mentioned the need for new advocates, parents, and general education teacher representation from the Southern Region of Arkansas for the Advisory Council. Please submit all written nominations via email to Courtney or Matt for consideration. Mr. Sewell welcomed the newest member of the Advisory Council, Dr. Gregory Hodges who will serve as a Program Administrator.

Section Reports:

Section Reports were presented and are available to view on the Special Education website.

Next Steps and Final Remarks:

The next Council meeting is scheduled for January 17, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. The meeting was adjourned at 2:59 p.m.