

Minutes

State Advisory Council For the Education of Individuals with Disabilities

The Arkansas Advisory Council for Education of Individuals with Disabilities met in the Conference Room at the Victory Building, Suite 445, on Thursday, April 19, 2012.

Council Members Present:

Christine Archer
Kim Coles
Courtney Eubanks
Bill Glover
Robert Gunter
Julie Mayberry
Kathryn Murphy
Kimberly Parker
Marsha Tolson
Barry Vuletich

Guest(s) Present:

None

Special Education Staff Present

Erica Baldwin
Lisa Haley
Howie Knoff
Danny Reed

Danny Reed
Courtney Salas-Ford
Donald Watkins

The meeting began at 9:10 AM with introductions of the Advisory Council Members and Special Education Staff.

There was not a quorum; therefore, no action was taken on the minutes from January 19, 2012.

INTRODUCTION

Lisa Haley- Welcome to the advisory council meeting, we thank you all for coming. There is an agenda in your packets. Since there are few staff and members present the meeting will be short and will probably be done before lunch. Martha Kay wanted to be here today as always but she's in Atlanta representing Special Education at a meeting on common core state standards. Our chair Deb Swink and our vice chair Debra Culpepper are also unable to attend. So this is my second meeting, third month on the job and I'm your facilitator. So we'll make it through the best we can. I want to thank Erica for putting this together. She did all the food, helped with the tables and arranged everything. So we certainly appreciate that. We have a new member here today and that is Dr. Robert Gunter and he will be replacing Rod Duckworth. Dr. Gunther is the Deputy Director of Career and Technical Education and we're certainly glad he has joined us on the advisory panel for Special Education.

Danny Reed - We are in the process of recommending a person for our administrator in the area of service grants and the deaf/blind project. We have set interview dates for the administrator for the Curriculum Assessment Research position. We have interview dates for our Compliance Specialist position with Courtney and then we have one more administrative II position but we have not setup any dates for that. But we're hoping to be fully staff for the first time in a long time by July 1st or August 1st. The wheels turn a little bit slower in the hiring process with the state.

AREA REPORTS

Grants - Donald Watkins

This past quarter, Grants & Data Management have been providing technical assistance to districts and education service cooperatives, reviewing budgets, processing payment requests, and trying to finalize ARRA activities. Approving school districts budgets has consumed much of our time. All 31 of the preschool budgets have been reviewed and approved. There are 260 School districts that includes the charter schools and sad to say, only 70% of those budgets have been approved. In my opinion we should be finished but there are a number of issues at hand. So we take a much tighter look at what we approve because districts certainly blame us if they get something that they did wrong. So we take a close look at everything we have to approve. One of the things that have challenged us this year is the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) money, better known as the stimulus money, the districts had 27 months to obligate that money and 30 months to spend it. Well, an easy way to spend that money was to buy transportation for special education students who required specialized transportation. In Arkansas we had 165 districts purchase a school bus and that became a flag for the Feds and they started looking at what we were approving. We felt we had approval to allow the districts to purchase a bus and use it for transporting both special education and non-special education students. In the review, the Feds indicated that wasn't so. Looking back we see that we were wrong and we had to meet with 75 of those 165 districts and tell them they have to prorate the costs. The Feds gave us an avenue to allow the districts to move expenditures that have already occurred in some other fund and that has been very time consuming for us because it's a challenge. Coming up soon is funding for catastrophic students in the state and as you can see on the printout it has the dollar amounts on it. We have 11 million dollars appropriated through the state for catastrophic funding. Our deadline for submitting catastrophic financial information was last Monday and now we're working on determining exactly how much funds each school will get. The total request was for 19 million. Some of those (students) will not be eligible because that's part of what we're looking at to see which ones are expenditures that are not allowed. There is a review team that visits each student placed on the catastrophic occurrence list. There's a registry they have to enter each student by February 1st and if they're not entered by February 1st, they're not eligible anyway. We have like 650 kids that have been submitted this year so something's going to have to give because we cannot go above 11 million dollars. I mentioned earlier we do training for high schools and our first training session we plan to

conduct is June 12 because most of the LEA Supervisors will be in town for the Standards Based IEP conference our staff will conduct. We're combining our training with the Standards Based IEP workshop. We'll continue to process those budget amendments and I'm a little disappointed that we're not finish with those by now but we'll move forward and finish the rest of them. Then we'll look forward to those coming back in next year. Hopefully we'll stay fully staffed.

Monitoring and Program Effectiveness - Lisa Haley

First, I'm happy to report that we have two new staff members in the Monitoring and Program Effectiveness Unit. One is Kristen Hughes with Non-Traditional Programs. Belinda King joined our school age monitoring team. For FY 2012, there have been 64 programs monitored for compliance with state and federal regulations governing programs for students with disabilities. Fifty-six (56) are school-age programs (ages 5 – 21), six are early childhood programs (ages 3-5) and two are state-operated programs. Based on the information collected and analyzed during the official monitoring of these agencies, it was determined that as of this date, six school-age programs were out of compliance with requirements set forth in the regulations and corrective actions were necessary. These districts were cited for noncompliance in the following areas:

- Due Process
- Protection in Evaluation Procedures
- Procedures for Evaluation Specific Learning Disability
- Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Free Appropriate Public Education
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- System of Personnel Development

We monitor schools and state-operated programs on a 4 year cycle. About 72 per year, we're out all the time and each visit are 2 – 5 days and depending on the number of students and child count, depend on the number of monitors there on site. Just so you know we have 7 school age monitors, 2 early childhood monitors, and 3 non-traditional monitors. In addition to monitoring, we provide on-going technical assistant to LEA's in state-operated programs based on their individual needs and requests. That's a big part of our job. Unfortunately we have so many regulatory items we have to look at when we're monitoring, that we don't have nearly as much time to do technical assistant and professional development that we would like to do that we would hope would better impact student outcome. We are in the process of reviewing our monitoring process and we will continue to monitor for regulatory issues because we need to do that to ensure the students are having their needs met receiving a free appropriate education. We would also like to establish monitoring priorities so that schools could meet or exceed the target score on indicators, so we're looking at streamlining our process and having a little more time to do those kinds of technical activities and professional development to help schools to move forward in those areas.

Dispute Resolutions - Courtney Salas-Ford

I am actually pleased to say there has been a significant decrease in the number of complaints filed and I hope that's evidence of efforts on personnel in our section and some of our other staff working more closely with districts and parents when these issues arise to not let them rise to the level of a complaint or hearing. Twenty complaints have been filed and we've actually received 4 since this report was issued, but even at 26 that's a far cry from the 49 we were up at this time last year. I'm very optimistic that's a trend we're going to continue. Danny and I have done several trainings for districts hoping they could address the problem before they occur. As Danny stated, we have a position open in Dispute Resolution for a Compliance Specialist. That person is not only going to focus on the districts complying with the reports after they're issued but also working with the districts and the parents on the front end to avoid these complaints before they're filed and even after they're filed getting them to resolve the issues without us having to go in and order them to do something. We're still making an effort with the mediation clinic to get mediation more used. They've recently hired a new administrator for that and I was hoping she would be here today but she couldn't be so we're thinking maybe having her here for the next meeting so she can tell you what her ideas are for the mediation clinic and what she plans to do. We've already done some special education knowledge training with the mediators because while they're very knowledgeable about the mediation process, except for maybe 2 of them, special education is not their expertise. We feel that by getting them more knowledgeable and encouraging districts and parents to use them, that mediation and maybe eventually IEP facilitation will be an option we can offer to districts at no charge. This is all for working towards reducing the number of conflicts and disputes between districts and parents.

State Personnel Development Grant - Howie Knoff

We are in the middle of writing our annual report which is due the first week of May. You folks also are our advisory board for the State Personnel Development Grant. It's a five year grant from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and we're in our second iteration. Right now, we're in the middle of our third year. We are analyzing the data and preparing to describe our accomplishments relative to both our Project goals and OSEP's Program goals. The major focuses of OSEP's Program goals are implementation integrity, scale-up, and how much grant money is being devoted to follow-up professional development and capacity-building. Beyond that, let me focus a little bit on Positive Behavioral Support because that's certainly something I was asked to do here and it's an important one. The notion for us is that academics instruction and achievement is interdependent with discipline behavior management and self-management. When we're looking at behavior, for us, the ultimate goal is to help kids to learn the skills, at the appropriate development levels, that relate to social, emotional, and behavioral self-management. So it's not just about decreasing discipline approach to the office or alternative environment placement or suspension or expulsion. We want to do that and that's one of our seven primary positive goals, but we want to focus, more so, on academic engagement; social, emotional, behavioral self-management. We want staff to be able to address some of the social, emotional,

behavioral needs in the classroom and support parent and community involvement. If you go to the Positive Behavioral Support area of the website, you got any number of technical assistant papers, there are some evaluation scales, behavioral observation protocols, and we developed for the state a classroom walk-through. We're trying to give the districts tools, to isolate and identify hotspots so that they can analyze what's going on and solve the problems. We're trying to change behavior.

Council Members were encouraged to ask any questions and make comments on topics they would like to discuss in the next meeting. Items suggested for future meetings include:

- ALE placement and changes to their regulations
- Update/report on the Autism Task Force
- Services provided to the Division of Youth Services
- Information from Arkansas Transition Services

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 P.M.