

Minutes

State Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities

The Arkansas Advisory Council for the Education of Individuals with Disabilities met in the Conference Room at the Victory Building, Suite 445, on Thursday, April 23, 2015.

Council Members Present:

Denise Jones Ennett
Courtney Eubanks
Bill Glover
Julie Mayberry
Jim Moreland
Candia Nicholas
Sherry Rogers
Marylene Tate
Barry Vuletich

Special Education Staff Present:

Ella Albert
Becky Cezar
Jeanie Donaldson
Jody Fields
Debbie Fleming
Chris Foley
Jennifer Gonzales
Lisa Haley
Lisa Johnson
Beverly Leonard
Courtney Salas-Ford

Guest Present: Norman Hill

The meeting began at 9:15 a.m. with Ms. Courtney Eubanks, Vice Chairperson, calling the Council meeting to order with the welcoming and introductions of the Advisory Council members, Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE-SEU) staff, and the guest of the meeting. Ms. Lisa Johnson, Personnel Development Coordinator for ADE-SEU introduced new staff member, Vicki Kellogg, who is the administrative assistant for Special Projects and the Children and Youth with Sensory Impairments (CAYSI) Project. Ms. Eubanks asked the Council to review the minutes from the January 22, 2015, meeting. Mr. Bill Glover made the motion to approve the minutes and Ms. Marylene Tate seconded the motion.

Lisa Haley, Associate Director, ADE-SEU – informed the Council that the Part B Application for funding, which is submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) annually, is available for public review. The assurances section of the application, which includes procedures that ensure a free appropriate public education is being provided to all students with disabilities in the State, was updated this year. Ms. Haley provided examples of how funds would be used in the coming year, including professional development and other technical assistance efforts around improving least restrictive environment outcomes, early childhood services, and the State Systemic Improvement Plan's (SSIP) focus on literacy. Ms. Haley asked the Council for input regarding areas of need related to the state's technical assistance efforts, monitoring, etc., that would impact the budget. She explained that there is flexibility to do some innovative things and asked for comments on areas the Council would like to see more focus placed. Ms. Haley directed the Council to the ADE-SEU Website where the Part B Application is posted for review.

Debbie Fleming, State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) –updated the Council on SPDG grant activities and resources including the Literacy Learning Progressions Website which will be available May 1.

Becky Cezar, Administrator of Monitoring/Program Effectiveness, ADE-SEU – reported on the self-monitoring process. One cycle of the self-monitoring process is totally complete with very few findings and there are three more cycles to complete. In reviewing IEPs as a part of this process, it was found that there is a systemic need for professional development around writing standards-based IEPs. The Monitoring section is developing modules to address this need, which will be presented to different regions of the state. Additionally, the first pilot for results-driven monitoring will take place in the Augusta School District in May. Other professional development activities to be provided this summer include Existing Data Review and Evaluation Program Conference Decision (EDR/EPC) training, Self-monitoring training and Early Childhood Provider training. And, the Monitoring Office is in process of writing a State Special Education Procedural Guide, which is targeted for completion in Spring 2016.

Jennifer Gonzales, Coordinator of SSIP and Curriculum/Assessment, ADE-SEU – provided an update on features of the new state assessments and where the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) currently stands with the state legislature. Ms. Gonzales provided a sheet listing the accessibility features and accommodations for PARCC.

Lisa Johnson, Personnel Development Coordinator, State Program Development, ADE-SEU – updated the Council on professional development activities including revising the Paraprofessional Modules for Core Paraprofessional Training, along with tuition reimbursement for teachers and paraprofessionals pursuing special education licensure and those pursuing licensure in vision and hearing licensure and speech/language pathology. Support is also being provided for professional development and training for educational interpreters.

Jennifer Gonzales – presented updates on the CAYSI grant. The state is in year two of a five-year grant. The Collaborative Partnership Consortium (CPC) is meeting with CAYSI quarterly to work on an intensive training for people who work with children with dual sensory impairment. CAYSI has also been developing parent training and is collaborating with the Southeast Regional Deafblind Team on a family conference call pilot program. Ms. Gonzales also gave an update on the Arkansas Co-Teaching Project. Ms. Haley stated that we are looking at partnering with Johns Hopkins University to develop online modules for co-teaching.

Becky Cezar – introduced a new staff member in the Monitoring Section, Robin Stripling, who has taught general and special education, has been an instructional coach and a literacy consultant for SPDG.

Phillip Adams, Director of Arkansas Promise Grant – spoke to the Council regarding a collaborative five-year federal grant - Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) - through the U.S. Dept. of Education that funds a research project geared toward youth who are receiving benefits through the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. PROMISE promotes readiness for work and transition after school. Goals focus on improving the quality of life for the participants in the grant and reducing the long-term reliance

on SSI and other benefits. To enroll in PROMISE, a student must be between 14 and 16 years of age and currently be receiving SSI benefits. Ms. Deborah Wilson, former Special Education Director for Fayetteville School District, has been hired as a liaison to help connect the ADE and local school districts with PROMISE.

Sandra Hurst, Director of Educator Effectiveness, ADE - shared with the Council an overview of the activities of the Office of Educator Effectiveness and the Teacher Excellence Support System (TESS). Ms. Hurst explained the process of evaluating teachers in a way that will support them, rather than using it as a way to dismiss them. She provided a handout and discussed the four domains from Charlotte Danielson's "Framework for Teaching". Ms. Haley and Ms. Hurst discussed the importance of the retention of special education teachers.

Chris Foley, Administrator of Grants and Data Management, ADE-SEU - provided updates on funding and finance. All district budgets have been approved and districts have been notified. All budgets for the preschool programs have been completed as well. Catastrophic funding is now in the review and approval process. Ms. Foley stated that the office is still in the process of working with two consultants and a pilot group of approximately 20 districts on a new application process in an effort to have special education programs approved prior to July 1.

Courtney Salas-Ford, Administrator of Dispute Resolution, ADE-SEU - updated the Council members on due process hearing issues and complaints. There were eight new hearings requested and 16 new complaints since the last Advisory Council meeting in January.

Jennifer Gonzales – reported on updates and activities of the SSIP. The SSIP is focused on increasing the literary achievement of students with disabilities. The first phase was submitted to OSEP on April 1 and Ms. Gonzales discussed the identified strategies for this first phase. The second phase of the SSIP will involve developing an in-depth implementation plan for each of these strategies and evaluating the outcomes in targeted SSIP LEAs.

Jody Fields, Special Education Data Manager - provided updates from the Data and Research Office. The child count in all groups rose compared to last year's numbers. Federal reporting data was submitted to OSEP by April 1 that included child count and the state performance plan/annual performance report. Preparations are underway for the Cycle 7 end-of-year data collection as well as the 2015 Special Education Data Summit to be held in June.

Jeanie Donaldson, Medicaid in the Schools (MITS) - informed the Council of the claim amounts for the third quarter's direct services with a breakdown of reimbursements by type of therapy along with the amounts for indirect services and Medicaid match. Ms. Donaldson also spoke about the activities the MITS Office is now undertaking which include the revalidation process for districts providing therapy, working with districts with code changing issues, contacting districts on the underperforming list, working on a training manual for districts and working with DHS and physicians' offices to clear up confusion on DMS-640's. MITS will be presenting a one-day session at the School Health Service Conference in June.

Future agenda items:

- Ms. Haley spoke to the Council about the possibility of having a national expert come in to work with the Council on the role of the State Advisory Council and how the Council might operate more effectively. The Council expressed interest in this.
- Denise Jones Ennett spoke to the Council about the need for an introductory type of IEP training for parents explaining acronyms, an overview of parents' rights, etc., so the parent would feel more prepared before attending school conferences. A suggestion was made to improve the Special Education Website to include links to parent resources. Ms. Haley talked about having a site specifically for parents. She suggested that someone from the Parent Resource Center and the Parent Training and Information Center might want to partner and come speak to the group next time.
- Julie Mayberry brought up two items the Council might want to consider for future agenda items.
 - ✓ Asking Rep. Mary Broadway to speak on the Building Better Futures program
 - ✓ Having someone speak on the Succeed Scholarship program

Ms. Eubanks stated that the next meeting will be July 23, 2015, at 9:00 a.m.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 1:45 p.m.