

Minutes

State Advisory Council For the Education of Individuals 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 24, 2014.

Council Members Present:

Bobby Acklin
Christine Archer
Sarah Allen
Kim Coles
Courtney Eubanks
Bill Glover
Valarie Harvel
Jim Moreland
Kimberly Parker
Deborah Swink
Marylene Tate
Barry Vuletich

Special Education Staff Present:

Martha Kay Asti
Jennifer Brown
Danny Reed
Samantha Duclos
Lisa Haley
Courtney Salas-Ford
Carrie Anderson
Jody Fields
Howie Knoff
Jennifer Gonzales
Lisa Haley

Guest(s) Present:

Lori Lamb

The meeting began at 9:07 A.M. with introductions and welcoming of the Advisory Council Members and Special Education Staff by Chairperson Deb Swink. A motion to approve two sets of minutes from the previous forum was initiated. Bobby Acklin made a motion to approve the minutes from October 17, 2013 and January 23, 2014. Sarah Allen seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Martha Kay Asti, Associate Director, Special Education Unit - reported that Donald Watkins has resigned and is no longer with the ADE. In discussions with the ADE, we are looking at changing some of the responsibilities within our finance office. Greg Rogers with ADE Finance is going to take over the grant calculations and the allocations to districts. It will be done similarly to Title I. We are in a transition period, and right now we are trying to get through the end of our fiscal year and get everything paid. Jennifer Gonzales is going to be our State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Coordinator.

Martha Kay Asti spoke briefly about the state application for Part B, explaining that we are required to submit an application to OSEP each year for funding. OSEP has been a little behind, as with a lot of federal agencies this year after their furlough, but they did get some figures to us most recently about our overall funding for next year. Last year we dealt with sequestration and were cut about 6.3 million, most of it in pass-through funds. This year, it appears that they restored about 4 million of that. We are still not up to where we were before sequestration but at least our allocation has increased.

Jennifer Gonzales, SSIP Coordinator – spoke about the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). SSIP is part of the larger Results Drive Accountability initiative out of the Office of

Special Education Programs (OSEP). OSEP is redesigning their accountability system, and looking at how states can design an accountability system in a way that improves results for all infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. Originally, we reported on 20 indicators and now we will be reporting on only 17 indicators. We are now looking at a six-year plan called the SSIP, which is due on February 2015. In phase one of the SSIP development we will do an infrastructure and data analysis to determine AR's state-identified measurable result and develop broad strategies for the plan. In Phase two, we will design the plan and evaluate measures. In Phase three we will have full implementation and evaluate outcomes.

Martha Kay Asti, Associate Director, Special Education Unit – updated the council about the State Program Development section of the special education unit. A committee is being formed of representatives all over the state for the purpose of reviewing and revising the AR Handbook for Educational Interpreters/Transliterations, Teachers and Administrators 2000. Tuition reimbursement programs are ongoing in supporting individuals pursuing licensure in vision impairments, hearing impairments, speech-language pathology, and special education. Twenty children have been qualified for the CAYSI project (Arkansas Deaf blind Project) and will be added to the national registry. Census submission to the National Center for Deafblindness was completed, and Arkansas will be reporting 122 students with deafblindness on December 1, 2013. The Co-Teaching Project continues to provide a yearlong professional development package to a statewide cohort of 19 schools from seven districts. Of those schools, three have been identified as Priority schools and 14 as Needs Improvement. The project's professional development team designed and provided on-site co-teaching coaching visits. In addition, the Co-Teaching team continues to develop resources that will be available to administrators, co-teachers, and other support staff in Arkansas. The AR Co-Teaching Project was recently recognized by Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) as a highly rated State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) initiative because of its continued refinement of professional development implementation evaluation practices.

Lisa Haley, Program Administrator of Monitoring and Program Effectiveness – provided a summary of monitoring activities as of April 5, 2014 explaining that the SEU has finished stage one of the review/revision of the monitoring system. So far this year, 39 school-age programs (ages 5-21) and four early childhood programs (ages 3-5) have been monitored for compliance with state and federal regulations governing programs for students with disabilities. Based on the information collected and analyzed during the official monitoring of these agencies, it was determined that two school-age programs were out of compliance with requirements set forth in the regulations and corrective actions were necessary.

Seven school-age programs and one early childhood program are piloting self-monitoring procedures as part of a tiered-monitored system. When this has been completed, these programs will receive a report from IDEA Data and Research Section, which will assist in planning for program improvement.

Two meetings have been held this year with 20 LEAs piloting the new Existing Data Review/Notice of Decision (EDR) and Evaluation/Programming Conference Decision Form/Notice of Decision (EPC) forms, and ongoing technical assistance has been provided to these programs by Special Education Area Supervisors. The general response thus far from the pilots has been extremely positive. A webinar will be hosted this spring to outline the DRAFT procedures associated with the new forms, and will be made available to all LEAs. Based on the feedback we receive from the LEAs that are participating in the pilot and comments received

from the field, revisions will be made and the new forms will be disseminated for review at the Fall LEA Academy.

Courtney Salas-Ford, Administrator for Dispute Resolution – reported that we have had five new hearings since January, but only three new complaints. An effort is being made to communicate with districts and parents to encourage them to communicate with each other to resolve their issues. Numbers for mediation have gone up significantly which has contributed to the decrease in complaints.

Last month, a new pilot project for facilitated IEP meetings was initiated and eight districts across the state were chosen to participate. As part of the project, those districts can choose one of the mediators that have been cross-trained as a facilitator to come to an IEP meeting as an independent third party between the parent and the district. The facilitator will try to help resolve any issues before they get to the level of a complaint or mediation. If successful, this will be offered to all school districts.

Jennifer Brown, Program Administrator for Curriculum and Assessment – reported on the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), a project led by five centers and 28 states charged with building an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. NCSC will also develop curriculum, instruction and professional development resources for teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities. To find more information about NCSC, Ms. Brown suggested members visit the NCSC website at www.ncscpartners.org.

The PARCC Field Test for the Performance Based Assessment will be completed in June. The majority of Arkansas school districts volunteered to participate and were assigned specific grade levels, subject areas, and test types. Data from both the NCSC Pilot Tests and PARCC Field Test will be used to inform final policy decisions and the development of test forms.

The ADE recently released Commissioner's Memo LS-14-065, which informed districts of some new course codes for special education classes. These codes were created due to the changes in assessments at the high school level. The Commissioner's Memo can be found at the following link: <https://adesharepoint2.arkansas.gov/memos/default.aspx>.

Our Behavior Support Specialists group has been extremely busy with over 600 student referrals made to date through CIRCUIT this school year. There have been 54 professional development offerings from the BSS group since the beginning of the school year, and there are 56 professional development offerings on the calendar for summer 2014, with more anticipated. The professional development being offered is designed to meet the needs of the ESC, district, school, and individual classrooms. The ADE-SEU plans to continue with the current organization of having BSS services available in every ESC and the Tri-District for the 2014-2015 school year.

Jody Fields, Special Education Data Manager – reported on the child count for 2013-14 school year. In 2013-14, Early Childhood declined (age 3 to 5) by 289 and School age (age 6 to 21) increased by 728. We have already submitted this year's State Annual Performance Report, which will be resubmitted tomorrow. We have also submitted the child count data, and we are in the process of submitting the Maintenance of Effort Report.

Deb Swink, Chairperson – provided the updates on Medicaid including third quarter amounts for direct services (\$6,510,955.07) and indirect services (\$3,000,000.00). Other information shared included that Medicaid is waiting on final changes to parental consent forms, and would be watching to see how the Medicaid private option will affect school districts (these changes may reduce Medicaid reimbursement). The revalidation process has begun and schools are required to pay the fee to re-enroll as providers for vision/hearing, personal care, and school based mental health services. Therapy and Audiology do not require the fee. Since the re-enrollment process has begun, the fee has increased from \$532 to \$542.

Howie Knoff, State Personnel Development Grant Services – SPDG staff was notified by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) – the agency that funds the SPDG – that there would not be a grant renewal competition this Spring (2014). SPDG recently submitted instead a proposal to OSEP for a “No-Cost Carry-Over” year (from October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015) so that we can continue selected SPDG goals with our unexpended funds. We expect there will be a grant renewal competition in the spring of 2015. Hopefully, SPDG will be re-funded during that time – beginning our third SPDG grant on October 1, 2015.

SPDG continues to coordinate services with the Arkansas Department of Education’s (ADE) Learning Services Division relative to the state’s approved Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility process. SPDG staff also continues to work on-site with a number of schools and districts across the state, and we added some additional schools/districts through our SPDG Request for Services process. We are working with our on-site districts and/or schools in one or more of our primary service areas – leadership, literacy/reading and math, PBSS/social, emotional, and behavioral interventions, RtI/Data-based Problem Solving, co-teaching, and/or recruitment and retention. The SPDG continues to support special education recruitment and retention activities across the state, as well as financially supporting paraprofessionals working toward their highly qualified status, and undergraduate students who are earning licensure in special education.

Deb Swink, Chairperson - made the suggestion that since Julie Mayberry (the council member that requested to have someone discuss the playground standards at this meeting) was not able to make it to the meeting, to hold off on that agenda item until a later date and the board agreed. Ms. Swink then introduced Lisa Haley to discuss the SLD Task Force.

Lisa Haley, Program Administrator of Monitoring and Program Effectiveness – briefly reported that the task force has been working together to come up with guidelines for children with specific learning disabilities. The three allowable methods are Severe Discrepancy, RTI, and Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses. Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses is most likely the method that most districts are least familiar with. The SLD Guidelines are general information that everyone needs to know. The draft is finished, and we hope to release it at the LEA Academy in Fall 2014.

Lori Lamb, Director of Alternative Education (AE) – attended upon request of the Advisory Council to speak about Alternative Education, and she brought some materials for members to browse through. Ms. Lamb explained that AE is not a punitive program and the students are not in in-school suspension. It is not a dumping ground, but a privilege for our students. AE is there to provide an opportunity for a positive setting and a worthwhile experience.

Courtney Eubanks, Vice Chair – informed everyone that our Chairperson had to leave the meeting early, so she wanted to know if there were any other questions, comments or concerns before adjourning the meeting for the day.

Barry Vuletich, council member, asked what we had decided on the Playground Standards topic and Ms. Eubanks told him that she did get in touch with Ms. Mayberry and it was decided that we would discuss that topic at a later meeting when Ms. Mayberry will also be in attendance.

There were no additional questions or comments. Our next meeting is July 24, 2014.

Barry Vuletich gave the motion to adjourn. Kimberly Parker seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 2:16 P.M.