

STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
National Conference Center at the Holiday Inn
399 Monmouth Street
East Windsor, NJ 08520

MINUTES

Thursday, July 19, 2007

Members in attendance: Dr. Sharon Maricle, Dr. Howard Lerner, Philip Gartlan, William Sellar, Scott Elliott, Melinda Jennis, Katherine Roberson, Angela Durso, Blanche Stetler

Members not in attendance: Carolyn Hayer, Kathleen Mullery, Dr. Norma Blecker, Debra Fernandez

Resource Representatives in attendance: Elizabeth Collins, Donna Brown, Gordon Reibman, Debbie Stewart

Resource Representatives not in attendance:

Guests and members of the public: Sol Heckelman, Lynn Guiser, Martha Brecher, Susan Coll-Guedes, Pamela Wood, Kathleen Husers

I. ACCEPTANCE OF JUNE MINUTES

The meeting was officially called to order at 9:40 a.m. by Chairperson Sharon Maricle. The June minutes were approved. **All in favor. One abstention.**

II. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

APR: The federal Office of Special Education Programs has completed its review of NJOSEP's Annual Performance Report that was submitted February 1, 2007. New Jersey was one of 41 states/territories receiving the determination "Needs Assistance" in implementing the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. Nine states received the determination Meets Requirements and 10 states/territories received the determination Needs Intervention. The majority of the 50 states received this designation. Dr. Wohle distributed the correspondence from the USDOE that detailed the basis of the determination as well as USDOE's response to each indicator. The USDOE's determination letter is posted on the NJOSEP website.

APA/Statewide Assessments: Dr. Wohle and Elizabeth Celentano from the Office of Evaluation and Assessment will be going to Washington D.C. this month to attending meetings regarding the Alternate Proficiency Assessment and Alternate Assessment Based on Modified Achievement Standards. As discussed at prior SSEAC meetings, a recent peer review raised questions about the test's alignment to state standards and whether it is a measure of student progress. Scoring has been based on a number of program indicators as well as student progress. Dr. Wohle expects that some revisions will be made to the APA as early as this summer.

Parent Survey: Dr. Wohle shared samples of the Parent Surveys for students with disabilities, ages 3 to 5 and 6 to 21. The survey will be used to collect data relevant to Indicator 8 of the State Performance Plan which assesses parent involvement in the special education process. Using a sampling calculator, the first cohort of districts has been selected to participate in this data collection.

III. COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Carol Kaufman, Office of Special Education Programs, facilitated a discussion regarding special education parent advisory groups in order to get the Council's input on possible changes to the current regulations. Many questions have been raised by both districts and parents about these advisory groups that further guidance/clarification seems necessary.

Council suggested a number of guidelines.

- The purpose of the group should be linked to Indicator 8 of the State Performance Plan, i.e., it should facilitate parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.
- There should be public notice to the community by the district to initiate the group. Ongoing notice of meetings should be posted under the guidelines of public notice.
- Membership should be open to all parents. Group should not be "hand selected" by the district. Efforts should be made to ensure that it is representative of the special education population in the district.
- Meetings should allow time for open comments (as at SSEAC or BOE meetings).
- The district representative to the group must be knowledgeable about district programs.
- The group should report to the superintendent (and superintendent should report to the board) at least annually. Their recommendations should be available to the public.
- The district should develop a policy that outlines the purpose of the parent advisory group and its general operation.
- The advisory group should be free to establish its own agenda. Minutes should be made available to the public.
- The district may use an existing group to meet the requirement of an advisory group if the group or a liaison(s) from the group is permitted to play an advisory role.
- The district may suggest possible topics for the advisory group and should assist in inviting/providing expertise as needed.

Chairperson Sharon Maricle asked Ms. Kaufman to keep the Council informed about changes being considered.

IV. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A number of public attendees commented on the need for further regulations and/or guidance regarding Special Education Parent Advisory Groups. Comments included:

- Legislation should not be micromanaged. The goal is to offer parents an opportunity to raise issues regarding special education programming within their district. Districts should support special education advisory groups financially and provide access to facilities and professional staff, but should be free to develop their own models.
- Groups should be open to all parents, not those selected by the district. The group, not the district, should determine the mechanics of the group. Participation of district personnel should be by invitation.
- Good models are in existence. Information should be made available to districts and parents. Groups should provide an opportunity for districts to listen to parent voices, beyond a mere discussion of issues.
- More information is needed, including possible action plans. At a minimum, districts should provide funding, possibly a budget line designated for the parent group.

- Groups need not be “advisory”, per se. They should be open only to parents of students with disabilities since the focus of the group is special, not general, education

V. LUNCH

Standing committees met during lunch. Committees will continue their discussions over the summer via e-mail and resume reporting in the fall.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned prior to lunch at 12:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for September 27, 2007 at the Holiday Inn in East Windsor.