



State Advisory Panel For Special Education

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Meeting Summary Windsor Hotel, Americus May 7 and 8, 2009

Thursday, May 7, 2009

Time	Item	
9:00 – 10:10	Welcome/Panel Member Updates	Stephanie Moss opened the meeting and welcomed comments and other input from Panel members. (Debbie Twiford was unable to attend.) State Board of Education member for the Southwest GA region, Elizabeth Ragsdale, joined the meeting to acquaint herself with SAP.
10:10 – 10:45	GaDOE, Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports	<p>Kim Hartsell was unable to attend due to other responsibilities. Nancy O’Hara, Director of the Division for Special Education Services, presented updates from the GaDOE. She discussed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCR complaint with Cobb County that resulted in guidance sent out by the GaDOE to all systems regarding special education diplomas and the wording on those diplomas. The other OCR guidance regarding transcripts and report cards was also discussed. The Department is still working on that guidance. • Project Search was discussed and how it facilitates the transition to work for students. Approximately 15 systems are participating in this activity sponsored by the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities. Mikki Garcia reported on its status in a hospital in Chatham County. • Nancy reported on the very successful G-CASE/GADOE conference for SpEd Directors in Athens in March. • She commented on DOE’s extensive work to improve the graduation rate for SWD (Students with Disabilities). • The Positive Behavior Supports program is succeeding and developing at a remarkable rate, with numerous systems having recently applied to become partners. • DOE has been reviewing the use of Occupational and Physical Therapists in order to improve their participation in the schools. The DOE is working with practitioners to develop guidance on the school based Occupational and Physical Therapy. • In April, the US DOE allowed states one week to clarify information submitted in the Annual Performance Report. GADOE was only asked to modify three words in the entire document. Final determination will be made by US DOE in June. • GADOE is working with the Georgia Academy for the Blind and will initiate a Deaf-Blind classroom for young children. • Ms. O’Hara addressed multiple issues around the structure and processing of state and federal funding. One is a High Cost fund that local systems can seek for students whose cost is at least three times that of regular SpEd students. An advisory committee of SpEd administrators will convene in June. • She commented on the status of the proposed change to the Hospital-Homebound rule, which the State Board is considering. She reminded the panel they had reviewed it several times. • She noted that GADOE will need to make some changes to Special Education rules because of several federal changes. These had to do with a parent’s right to unilaterally remove their child

		from Special Ed; and on the process for Low Vision evaluation. There will also be a minor modification to the eligibility for Specific Learning Disabilities. Much discussion ensued on several specifics, including the 12 week time period and which Tiers where it may occur. Class size rule will also be revisited. Adoption is anticipated no earlier than August or September. Nancy sought volunteers to facilitate public comment meetings around the state.
11:20 – 11:30	Federal Stimulus funds update and information	Ms. O’Hara presented on the release of federal stimulus funds for education and the GaDOE’s activities to ensure that funds assist in improving outcomes for students. GADOE provided recommendations, not requirements, for the use of the federal funds.
11:30-12:00	Public Comment Session	No public comment was received in person. Crystal Pritchett had submitted a late e-mail which was read to the Panel as no other public comment was received. Ms. Pritchett’s comments were calling attention to the issue of In-School Suspension ,the problems due to a lack of training and to a failure to address specific needs of SWD in ISS. She also called attention to the issue of bullying and its discriminatory aspect. Stephanie read this communication to the panel. Discussion ensued on this issue.
12:00-1:00	LUNCH	
1:00-2:15	Charter Schools: Explanation of types of charters in Georgia and special education in the charter schools	Sarina Russotto, GaDOE, Charter Division, explained to the group about the different types of charter schools and systems, the authorizers and also the role of special education in a charter school or system. The Panel asked questions and learned about charter schools.
2:30 – 3:30	Georgia Continuous Monitoring Program (GCIMP)	Julie Moilanen provided an extensive overview of the variety of ways the Divisions for Special Education Supports and Services monitor local systems for compliance with federal and state regulations.
3:30-4:30	LEA Determinations	Julie Moilanen discussed annual determinations with the group and recommendations for future years. Much discussion ensued with the Panel regarding recommendations about which State Performance Plan indicators should play into the annual determination required for each local system. The Panel recommended that the Performance Indicators continue to impact annual determinations in addition to the required compliance indicators.
4:30 – 5:00	Recognition of outgoing members	The following present members were recognized for their dedication and service to the State Advisory Panel: Lynn Pennington, Mikki Garcia, Suttiwan Cox, Bryant Shepard, Carol Phillips, Heidi Moore, Christine Kramlich, and Wendi Baird. These members 3 year term have ended and this was their last meeting.

Friday, May 8, 2009

Time	Item	
8:00-9:15	Committee Meetings	All committees met except Policies and Procedures.
9:15 – 10:00	Committee Reports	<p>Committees reported on current activities:</p> <p>Dispute Resolution—49 complaints/10 withdrawn, 89 due process requests/19 withdrawn, 68 mediation/24 withdrawn. A new form will help track which areas have the most problems. No trends in due process, but in complaints, RTI is a source of confusion, questions on highly qualified versus certified. Some parents want more inclusion or services, so full continuum is always needed. For future: proposed IEP facilitators—someone who is not invested in process. Recommend that parents have access to law—where to make accessible, make parents more informed.</p> <p>Public comment review: e-mail from Crystal Pritchett re training of ISS</p>

		<p>facilitators, possibility that many students in ISS are not receiving appropriate services. Issue of bullying, discrimination and dire consequences. Recommend new rule addressing this—that if certified teacher not available, then ISS days count as OSS days.</p> <p>Parent engagement: 3 areas of concern—implementation manual: change name to something more parent friendly. Make it stand out more on DOE web site, have link directly to it. Recommended fact sheets on IEP, service delivery, LRE, FAPE, discipline. Materials on transition are hard to find. Finish draft transition checklist document, put on web, perhaps linking to related organizations. Parent rights—also not easy to find, needs updating. Acronyms—define better, have it take you to that section in IM. Concerned about counties and IEP attendance, 92 have 25% who don't attend IEP meetings, 52 have 50% who don't attend. Many systems don't have parent mentors, look at this next session. Nancy clarified some of the organizational aspects for a system that has/wants a parent mentor.</p> <p>Membership—41 applications. Will make recommendations next week, State Board will act on them in July. Still need several demographic variables filled. Will be seeking approval of 11 or more members to keep the balance of 51% parents and/or individuals with disabilities.</p>
10:00-11:10	Focused Monitoring	<p>Julie Moilanen, GaDOE, reviewed the Focused Monitoring activities and data and elicited input for FY10. Training will be in late August for parent participants on monitoring teams. Last year used general ed administrators as part of the team or the first time, worked well. Ms. Moilanen was seeking input on the priorities for the next school year to focus outcome monitoring. The panel discussed the various options including graduation data, drop out data, disproportionality and transition. The Panel concluded that achievement impacts all other measures and agreed that achievement should remain the priority.</p>
11:30-12:30	Legislative update	<p>Panel member and Superintendent Lynda White updated the panel on the legislative actions from the 2009 session. She highlighted school choice, budget concerns, and other bills that will impact education.</p>
12:30 – 1:45	Working Lunch and State Advisory Panel Annual Report	<p>Panel reviewed the draft of the 2008-2009 Annual Report and discussed their recommendations to the State Board. Much discussion of multiple topics. The annual report will be drafted and sent to Panel members for their feedback, especially on the final recommendations that will be made to the state board of education. Panel members discussed over lunch in small groups the challenges to inclusion and presented a summary to the GaDOE to consider.</p>
2:00-2:30	Wrap-up	<p>Stephanie Moss provided a wrap-up of the Panel meeting and led discussion of future plans and initiatives and tentative dates and locations for next year. Dates for meetings for next year will be: September 24-25, November 10-11, January 21-22, and May 6-7.</p> <p>Suggested locations include: Athens, North GA near Dalton or Brasstown Bald, Savannah in connection with GCASE, Valdosta or Tifton and possibly Macon.</p>