

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

MINUTES

Thursday, March 20th, 2008

Members in attendance: Dr. Sharon Maricle, Dr. Howard Lerner, Philip Gartlan, William Sellar, Kathy Roberson, Carolyn Hayer, Kathleen Mullery, Angela Durso, Scott Elliott, Blanche Stetler

Members not in attendance: Dr. Norma Blecker, Debra Fernandez

Resource Representatives in attendance: Donna Brown, Gordon Reibman, Betsy Collins

Resource Representatives not in attendance: Debbie Stewart

Guests and members of the public: Sol Heckelman, Julie Caubel

I. ACCEPTANCE OF FEBRUARY MINUTES

The meeting was officially called to order at 9:45 a.m. by Chairperson Sharon Maricle. The February minutes were approved and seconded. **All in favor.**

II. PRESENTATION:

An Overview of NIMAS/NIMAC Policies and Procedures for the State of New Jersey.
Perkie Cannon, Office of Special Education Programs – Powerpoint Presentation

Perkie Cannon updated the Council on the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS). The standard established an electronic file format that makes textbooks and other instructional materials (elementary & secondary levels) accessible to students with print disabilities as mandated by IDEA 2004 (final provisions were included in the Federal Register, July 19, 2006). Students with print disabilities include students who are blind or visually impaired, students unable to use standard print due to a physical limitation and students certified by a physician as having a reading disability resulting from organic dysfunction.

A National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) was established to collect and store these files. The files (Textbook and related core material published after August 18, 2006) are available to authorized users. LEAs may “opt-in” or “opt-out” of participation in the NIMAC. OSEP is recommending that districts opt-in in order to guarantee the timely provision of accessible materials to students with print disabilities. There is no cost to “opt-in”. If LEAs choose to opt-out, they will need to provide assurances to NJDOE that accessible materials will be provided to these students. The decision to “opt-out” will be noted on the LEA’s EWEG application. Perkie Cannon reported that as of 2007, 80% of LEAs “opted-in”.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Transition Committee

Actions taken by the Transition Committee are bulleted below:

- Pursuing presentations from Marie Barry, Office of Career and Technical Education, on the Comprehensive Five Year Plan and from Lewis Gantwerk, New Jersey Center for Character Education (NJCCE), on Character Education.
- Exploring the academic and monitoring documents of New Jersey Code, while looking for a possible way to embed the term social skills. One possibility might fall within the continuous improvement section under monitoring.
- Reviewing curriculum and training materials on “Supportive Employment” offered at the Learning Resource Centers, within local school districts and within private organizations such as the University of Medicine and Dentistry, New Jersey (UMDNJ).
- Pursuing new trainings for aides who support students with disabilities, thereby encouraging increased student independence. Aides would use the technique of “fade away” whenever possible.

Inclusion Committee

Actions taken by the Inclusion Committee are bulleted below:

- Review of the Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) from the Capacity Building Grant, gave the committee a better understanding of “best practices” districts should be using.
- Want to explore the possibility of increased incentives for Districts who include special education students in general education for part of the day.
- This committee would like to “frame” an awareness of a changing culture where general education will be invited into a partnership along with agencies such as the Developmental Disability Council (DDD).
- The committee would like to promote inclusive practices beginning with preschool classes.

Parent Committee - (Temp Ad. Hoc)

Actions being pursued by the Parent Committee are highlighted below:

- This committee would like the NJDOE to clarify the purpose and the vision of the district parent advisory groups.
- There is concern that districts will hand pick only parents they want for participation in the district parent group. The committee would like the department to issue guidance on “Best Practices” for the implementation of the parent groups.

IV. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

STATEWIDE PARENT ADVOCACY NETWORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Roberta Wohle spoke to approximately 125 parents at SPAN's Annual Conference. A major focus of the presentation was the State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators. This generated conversation with the conference participants regarding the following:

- The importance of districts tracking the number of days students with disabilities are suspended/expelled (Indicator 4);
- How the local district self-assessment process would influence individual student placements
- Clarification regarding the right to specify curricular modifications in the IEP if a student is receiving an in-class resource program
- Concerns regarding the requirement for parent advisory groups, with several parents indicating that their parent groups had been established and were operating effectively.

The Council requested that Roberta Wohle contact the parent groups that indicated positive outcomes and invite them to a SSEAC meeting.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE SERVICES SURVEY

Roberta Wohle provided background information regarding a survey that was recently sent to Chief School Administrators regarding the certification status of providers of speech and language services in schools

In 1988, with the support of the New Jersey Speech-Language Hearing Association, the NJDOE changed the certification for speech coercionists. From that date forward, anyone applying for certification was required to obtain a master's degree in speech pathology or communication disorders. This resulted in two levels of training for the provision of speech-language services.

Subsequently, in 1989, the federal regulations were revised to mandate that special education personnel of a particular profession or discipline meet the highest standard of credentials required for employment.

In September 1994, the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs required that the NJDOE develop a plan regarding the retraining of speech correctionists so that they would meet the higher standard. The plan included steps to notify all speech correctionists of the requirement to meet the higher standard, to survey the extent of retraining needs and establish a task force to develop a retraining program.

In 1998, after a competitive bidding process, the NJDOE entered into a contract with Kean University to administer the speech upgrade program. The NJDOE has continued to support the Kean University Speech Upgrade Program to the present time. Speech correctionists were informed that they were required to either obtain a master's degree and the speech-language specialist endorsement or complete the upgrade program and receive a speech-language specialist equivalency by December 2009 or they would no longer be able to provide speech-language services to schools.

With the reauthorization of the federal special education law in 2004, the requirements for providers to meet the highest standard and for states to take steps to retrain or hire personnel that met the highest requirements were removed.

In light of this change, and in anticipation of the December 2009 deadline, the NJDOE is currently conducting a survey to determine the number of speech correctionists that would be affected by the deadline. Upon review of the survey data, the NJDOE will determine if changes to the rules for Professional Licensure and Standards will be proposed to the State Board.

. Survey questions are as follows:

- Number of Speech Correctionists (full time or part time district employees) who do not hold a “speech-language specialist” endorsement or a “speech-language equivalent” certificate granted by the NJDOE
- Speech Correctionists who are currently enrolled in the speech upgrade project or a master’s degree program in speech pathology

Council members suggested that, if certification data were not already available, clinics and agencies should also be surveyed. Roberta Wohle indicated she would follow-up on this suggestion.

V. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no comments from the Public.

VI. COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Due to increased commitments, Melinda Jennis has resigned from SSEAC.

Council member Debra Fernandez was unable to be present at today’s meeting as her father passed away. Council asked the SSEAC secretary to send a card as an expression of sympathy.

Council approved the following dates for SSEAC meetings during the 2008-2009 School Year:

(2008) - September 18, October 16, November 20, December 18,

(2009) - January 15, February 19, March 19, April 23, May 21, June 11.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Council meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon. The next meeting of Council is scheduled on April 17th, 2008 at the Holiday Inn in East Windsor.

VIII. LUNCH