



# State Advisory Panel For Special Education

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## State Advisory Panel for Special Education

### ANNUAL REPORT 2010 - 2011

The State Advisory Panel (SAP) for Special Education, as established in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), provides input and recommendations to the Division for Special Education Services and Supports on the state performance plan, state improvement grants, the Georgia Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process, IDEA Regulations and other initiatives designed to improve outcomes for children with disabilities in Georgia's schools.

SAP members focused their work during the 2010-2011 school year on improving academic achievement for students with disabilities, parent engagement and Person Centered Planning. We recognize and appreciate the continued efforts of Debbie Gay, DeeDee Bunn and Linda Crawford and their staff for their support to Panel members throughout the year and for their continued efforts to work with other GaDOE Divisions, local systems, agencies and parents to promote student achievement.

#### **SAP Overview**

The SAP met four times during this year, in Augusta, Cave Springs, Cordele and Athens. An opportunity for public comment was provided at each of these meetings, allowing panel members the opportunity to hear from constituents around the state. During this year, panel members received information and presentations on navigating the GaDOE web site, the 2% modified assessment (CRCT-M), Focused Monitoring, Teacher Induction Program, the graduatefirst website ([www.graduatefirst.org](http://www.graduatefirst.org)), the new online IEP pilot program and the common core standards that will be rolled out next year. Students at the Georgia School for the Deaf provided input about their school experience and exhibited their talent to the panel. Panel members provided input to the Department to assist in the development of the State Performance Plan and the Annual Performance Report as well as in setting focused monitoring priorities for FY2012.

#### **Panel Membership**

This year, the SAP membership included twenty-two parents of students with disabilities, three individuals with a disability, representatives from the state protection and advocacy agency, the parent training and information center, PART-C, local school administrators, and representatives from Title I, higher education and private schools. In addition, relevant state agencies, including individuals from the Departments of

Education, Juvenile Justice, Labor (Vocational Rehabilitation), Corrections, Family and Children Services, were represented. The Georgia Council for Administrators of Special Education (GCASE) and the Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) were also represented. Members represented a diversity of knowledge, background and opinions and brought their own real life personal and/or professional experiences to their work on the SAP. All members worked throughout this year to support system-level improvements with a goal to promote greater outcomes and improved student achievement for all students with disabilities and improve graduation rate.

## **Committees**

Five standing committees met regularly, in conjunction with each quarterly meeting of the full panel. A brief description of each committee follows:

- **Dispute Resolution** – The Dispute Resolution Committee reviews data and decisions related to due process proceedings and other forms of dispute resolution. Upon review of data at each quarterly meeting, committee members make recommendations as well as requests for follow-up to the Division related to their findings.
- **Family Engagement** – The Family Engagement Committee assists in the review of fact sheets for families on initial and annual evaluations, transition from Babies Can't Wait into school, transition out of high school, IEPs, and discipline. The committee also reviews data and information related to parent participation in individualized education program (IEP) meetings and parent response rates on the parent survey. The parent survey is disseminated each year in order to assess the percentage of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. This committee makes recommendations for strategies and materials to support increased family engagement.
- **Public Comment** - The Public Comment Committee receives and tracks all public comments submitted to the SAP for review, including those received in writing and in person. Committee members make recommendations for any necessary follow-up and/or response following receipt of each comment.
- **Policies and Procedures** - The Policies and Procedures Committee reviews and makes recommendations related to the policies, procedures and by-laws that guide the operations of the SAP.
- **Membership** – The Membership Committee assists in the recruitment of new members each year. Committee members review all applications received from potential new members and make recommendations to the Divisions and the State Board of Education for new appointments.

## **Recommendations**

Specific recommendations from the full SAP membership as well as from sub-committee members follow:

1. Recommendation were made to update Policies and procedures to include:
  - Recording Meetings: Members and visitors are requested to notify panel members of intent to record any portion of the meeting (audio or video). In addition, the person recording the meeting is requested to not engage in any of the following: post on internet; allow viewing in a public forum by more than two people; and/or release it to third parties.
  - *Companion Attendance*: Panel members are welcome to bring companion to assist the panel member. It is not the role of the companion to participate in the panel discussions or committees.
2. *Dispute Resolution Committee*: The Department of Education has contracted with Parent to Parent to develop a series of fact sheets on pertinent special education issues. Parent to Parent will be sponsoring series of webinars on Due Process procedures to help inform parents using this process. The department has approved funding for mediators to attend training at the Justice Center.
3. Develop more strategies and guidance for systems to increase meaningful parent participation in the IEP process
  - Increase IEP participation from families of children in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Increase the support to the families of children in DJJ by providing a list of low cost Attorneys.
  - Parent satisfaction surveys are accessible to the families.
  - Add a link of the parent mentor website to the school website; this will make the families aware of the additional resources that are available to them.
4. Public Comments committee has made the following recommendations:
  - The committee recommended developing a formal acknowledgment letter to any individual making a public comment. The chair embraced the idea and has started following this process of sending signed acknowledgment letter.
  - Future meeting locations will be verified for availability of phone number for public comments and the number will be posted on the website prior to the meetings. So the public comments can be made in person, writing or call into the conference room (if available). The person wishing to call in must adhere to the same guidelines for giving public comment as outlined under Policies and Procedures.
  - Collaborate with Parent to Parent on webinar that explains public comments.
5. Investigate the census bureau tracking of disability data to help child find.

- The panel hopes this will help find some of the children that DOE is unable to track through child find.
6. The elements necessary for transition teams to have a successful transition process
    - These included when the initial transition plan should occur, who should be invited to be a part of the transition team, the transition form that IEP teams could use and the components that are required by the Department of Education for compliance.
    - Incorporate Person Centered Planning into the Transition Process.
    - Encourage families to provide input into the transition plan.
  7. Continue the implementation of the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) that focuses on reducing drop out and improving graduation rate for students with disabilities
    - This is a 5 year grant which is currently in year 4. The goal of the grant and the projects currently being implemented were discussed. These included: Graduate First, ASPIRE (Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement), Transition Plan Support, Family Engagement, and the Special Education Induction Pilot