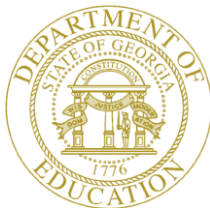


Georgia's Disproportionality Stakeholder Committee Meeting
November 16, 2010



Focus: Root Causes of Disproportionality

Summary: During the initial stakeholder committee meeting, Tom Munk, the Senior Education Analyst from the Data Accountability Center (DAC), shared helpful guidance about data calculations and methods. As a follow up to this information, Bonnie Dye, the State Data Manager, provided a 45-minute overview of Georgia's Disproportionality Calculations along with other updates from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

During the September stakeholder meeting, the committee suggested that the members divide in to three work groups: Workgroup 1 (Discipline), Workgroup 2 (Identification and Placement), and Workgroup 3 (Data Calculation and Criteria). Workgroups 1 and 2 discussed root causes and reviewed related literature and research. The primary focus for Workgroups 1 and 2 was to identify root causes for disproportionality and outline effective strategies to address the problem in local districts. Typically, the identification of root causes is the first step to rectifying identified challenges and finding solutions. Workgroup 3 continued to examine Georgia's data calculations and determination criteria. The group looked very specifically at calculations and filters necessary to ensure statistical validity in determining disproportionality. The overarching question the group sought to answer was, "Do Georgia's current calculations appropriately measure disproportionality for local districts?"

At the end of the second day, Susan Durant, Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC), facilitated the group reports and findings. Both Workgroups 1 and 2 identified similar root causes for disproportionality:

- Failure of educators to understand the needs of children from diverse backgrounds;
- Misidentification, misuse of tests;
- Lack of access to effective instruction;
- Teachers who are not well prepared;
- Inappropriate assessment instruments; and
- Poverty.

Workgroup 3 reported that additional time was needed to review the information, reach consensus, and share the findings.

Recommendations:

Workgroups 1 and 2 made the following recommendations based on the root cause analysis.

- Districts should provide more early interventions for at-risk students and work closely with other agencies (e.g., Babies Can't Wait, Headstart, etc.).
- Don't make academic and/or behavioral decisions about students based on subjective information alone.
- Cultural responsiveness training and professional development are necessary.
- Support the staff in addressing attitudinal issues and concerns.
- It is imperative for progress monitoring and good diagnostic procedures to be in place beginning at Tier 1.

Workgroups 1 and 2 recommended that the GaDOE invite additional stakeholders (e.g., principals, teachers, student support team coordinator, etc.) from the local districts to participate in future stakeholder meetings. Many stakeholders believed that the input of the additional stakeholders would prove invaluable as the workgroups advise the State. It was decided that each stakeholder would bring one person from his/her district to the next scheduled meeting.

Note: The following stakeholders attended the committee meeting.

Brooks, Kristina	Oconee County, Director of Special Education
Burrell, Denise	Griffin-Spalding County, Associate Superintendent
Drakeford, Donna	GaDOE, Education Program Specialist (School Improvement Specialist)
Durant, Susan	Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC)
Dye, Bonnie	GaDOE, Education Program Specialist (Data Manager)
Falk, Jennifer	Parent to Parent of Georgia, Advocate
Freer, Paula	GaDOE, Education Program Specialist, (Emotional and Behavioral Disorders)
Fretwell, Quentin	DeKalb County, Director of Student Relations
Garcia, Mikki	Chatham County, Special Education Director
Gay, Deborah	GaDOE, Director (Division for Special Education Services and Supports)
Gibbs, Mary	Stewart County, Parent Mentor
Henderson, Jasolyn	GaDOE, Education Program Specialist (PBIS)
Hodges, Jeff	GaDOE, Education Program Specialist (Safe and Drug Free Schools)
Horton, Chris	Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education (GCASE), President Fayette County, Special Education Director
Jones, Wanda	GaDOE, Education Program Manager (Data Collections)
Lynch, Elise	GaDOE, Education Program Specialist (Professional Learning)
McNair, Deborah	Cook County, Special Education Director
Newsome, Talithia	Richmond County, Special Education Director
O'Connell, Ginny	GaDOE, Education Program Manager (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports)
O'Connor, John	DeKalb County, Executive Director of Special Services
Schreiner, Lodus	Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) Metro East, Program Specialist
Smith, Cristy	GLRS Metro East, Director
Smith-Dixon, Zelfphine	GaDOE, Education Program Manager (Elementary Curriculum/School Improvement)
Walker, Adrienne	GaDOE, Assessment Research and Development
White, Lynda	Butts County, Superintendent