



State Advisory Panel

For Special Education

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Minutes Summary
State Advisory Panel Meeting
September 15-16, 2011
Brasstown Valley Resort, Young Harris, GA
Conference Call Phone Number: 1-706-379-4646

September 15, 2011

| Time | Events | |
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| 7:30 – 8:30 | CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST (provided) | |
| 8:30 – 9:00 | Welcome Panel Member Introductions and Update | Nancy Woods, Chair, and Linda Meiring, Vice-Chair, welcomed members. Panel members introduced themselves and updated the panel on events that occurred since the last meeting. |
| 9:00 – 10:15 | State Advisory Panel Orientation | <p>Nancy Woods, Chair, officially opened the meeting and listed the members attending the panel meeting. Attendees were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uzoma Anadu • Scott Bales • Robin Blount • William Butler • Steve Derr • Dru Fentem • Kristie Johnson-Gregory • Phillip Meller • Danette Rogers • Cynthia Spaulding • Radha Vettrano • Natalie Whitlow • Nancy Woods • Wendi Baird • Kyle Berry • Denise Burrell • Chase Bolds • Jennifer Dickson • Cody Fontenot • Linda Meiring • Sue Riner • Cathy Smith-Jackson • Karen Thrasher • Lynda White • Donnie Winokur |

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| | | <p>Nancy Woods and Linda Meiring conducted an orientation for all members of the State Advisory Panel.</p> <p>The purpose of the panel and the evolution of laws related to special education were discussed. The laws important for SAP members to understand were highlighted, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 were highlighted.</p> <p>The purpose of the panel to advise was reviewed including the need for the panel to advise the Georgia Department of Education on the needs for all students with disabilities. They can also advise on the needs of students with disabilities served in juvenile justice facilities.</p> <p>Specific duties of the Georgia panel were discussed, including the responsibility to advise on the State Performance Plan (SPP), the state’s Annual Performance Report (APR) and Georgia district’s levels of determination as reported to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).</p> <p>Other programs that the panel can provide input on were reviewed. These included the Georgia Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP) and the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG).</p> <p>The standing committees established for the panel were reviewed and members were asked to sign up to serve on a committee for this coming year.</p> <p>Questions and comments were taken from the panel members.</p> |
| 10:15 – 10:30 | BREAK | |
| 10:30 – 12:00 | GaDOE Legal Services | <p>Gregg Stevens, GaDOE Deputy General Counsel, reviewed the legal framework for the State Advisory Panel.</p> <p>He discussed the panel’s role as defined in IDEA to provide guidance to the department with regards to the unmet needs of students with disabilities in Georgia. The panel has played a significant role in providing guidance in the past, such as with increasing family engagement and providing input on the restraint and seclusion rule. The panel has the opportunity to provide comment on state board rules specifically related to students with disabilities and rules that would affect students with disabilities, such as the graduation rule.</p> <p>The panel plays an important role in advising the GaDOE on</p> |

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| | | <p>the coordination of services with other state agencies involved in child welfare, such as Babies Can't Wait and the Department of Juvenile Justice.</p> <p>The panel reviews decisions from due process hearings. This is one duty not listed in IDEA, but is derived from the due process procedures.</p> <p>The operation procedures of the panel were discussed. These are adopted and amended by the panel. Examples of key components of panel operation procedures were given, such as companions for individuals with disabilities. Interpreters and other necessary services must be provided for panel members as needed.</p> <p>The opportunity for individuals to make public comment was also discussed. The panel has provided the ability to make comment in person, by written comment or by phone call. Comments should be factual and contain no identifying information if discussing students, as public comments are also public.</p> <p>SAP procedures state that the meetings are open meetings, so while there is some question as to whether the meetings need to adhere to the Georgia Open Meetings Act, it is best to adhere to that act. Materials generated by the panel should also adhere to the Open Records Act, so anything created by the panel is open for public review. Educational records with personally identifiable information would be exempt.</p> <p>Questions and comments were taken from the panel.</p> |
| 12:00 – 1:00 | LUNCH (provided) | |
| 1:00 – 2:00 | Common Core Standards | <p>Jan Wyche, the GaDOE Common Core Coordinator, presented on the Common Core Standards, including the roll out of the standards and alignment to the curriculum.</p> <p>Georgia is one of 45 states to adopt the Common Core standards. The roll-out of the standards will be conducted over a 3 year period. These standards are rigorous and align with international benchmarks with the same standards being utilized across the nation, leveling the playing field for students as they move from state to state. It will also provide for collaboration between states, the pooling of resources and professional development opportunities.</p> <p>The English-Language Arts and Math standards were reviewed with the panel and information provided on the strands within</p> |

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| | | <p>each set of standards.</p> <p>The process of moving from the Georgia Performance Standards to the Common Core was discussed with the panel, as well as the next steps involved in implementing the standards using instructional strategies and resources. Assessments are also being designed for the Common Core through the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium.</p> <p>Professional learning will be provided through Elluminate sessions for school district personnel throughout the state beginning in January. Training will be conducted this year and the rollout of the standards will begin the next year.</p> <p>Questions and comments were taken from panel members.</p> |
| 2:00 – 2:15 | BREAK | |
| 2:15 – 3:00 | Statewide Assessment | <p>Tony Eitel, GaDOE Director of Assessment Administration Assessment and Accountability, presented on the new assessments in development that will be aligned with the Common Core.</p> <p>He discussed the basis of the Common Core standards and the timeline for implementation of the standards. These timelines are common across the nation. Existing assessments will remain in place with incorporation of the Common Core standards into those assessments. Assessments based on the Common Core standards will become operational in the 2014-15 school year.</p> <p>Georgia is a member of two consortiums that are developing assessments for the Common Core: The Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC). Georgia is a governing state in the PARCC consortium, which allows us to have a vote in final decisions that are made.</p> <p>The PARCC is investigating the design of the assessments and is considering an assessment that incorporates course assessment that shows student data through the year in addition to a summative assessment. The GaDOE is working with PARCC in assessment content and design, technology features, accommodations and how students with disabilities will interact with the assessments.</p> <p>The National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) is working on the development of a 1% assessment for students with disabilities. There are nineteen states, many which are also in PARCC, focused on the development of a new alternate</p> |

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| | | <p>assessment. Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA) teachers are being surveyed on the learning characteristics of their students taking the GAA. This year is the data collection learning process period. The timeline for development of an alternate assessment with 2014-15 as the year for full operational administration of assessments.</p> <p>At this time, the US Department of Education is not making an allowance for a 2% assessment for the upcoming Common Core assessments.</p> <p>Questions and comments were taken from the panel.</p> |
| 3:00 – 4:00 | GaDOE, Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports Update | <p>Debbie Gay presented updates from the Division for Special Education Services and Supports.</p> <p>Mrs. Gay discussed the graduation rule. A new graduation rule with changes required by House Bill 186 will be proposed this year. The House bill has some requirements that the current graduation rule does not address. One example concerns Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) courses. If these courses contain content that is considered to be core content necessary for graduation credit, 4 of these courses could be considered core courses.</p> <p>The assessment rule has changed for students entering the 9th grade this year (2011-12). These students will no longer be required to pass the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) to exit school, but rather will utilize End of Course TESTS (EOCT) tests as a part of their course grade to demonstrate mastery of course content. This will expand the options for a student to demonstrate mastery of the standards and may allow students with disabilities an increased opportunity to earn Carnegie units required for graduation.</p> <p>Last year (2011), the Georgia State School Board allowed local school boards to look at class size waivers. Special education classes are a part of any waiver granted.</p> <p>The State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) is in its fifth year. Through this grant, participating districts have increased their graduation rate by 10% and decreased dropout rate by 2%. Part of the SPDG grant includes the requirement to create something sustainable. A website has been developed with all the tools created through the grant to be available to interested districts.</p> <p>The partnership with the Marcus Center is continuing in order to provide training for teachers using the ABLES assessment tool. Kits were provided to participating districts last year and</p> |

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| | | <p>this year will continue training with the same teachers.</p> <p>The GATTAP groups are continuing with 13 regional consortiums built around the state.</p> <p>The Parent Mentor Conference will be held next week on September 21-23, 2011 in Athens. This is the 10th anniversary of the Parent Mentor program.</p> <p>Questions and comments were taken from panel members.</p> |
| 4:00 – 4:30 | Public Comment Session | <p>Two public comments were made at this panel meeting.</p> <p>Patricia Bloch, from Dekalb County, attended the panel meeting and made public comment. The following is a summary of her comment.</p> <p>Mrs. Bloch commented on students who were home-schooled, stating that she home-schooled her child and that while she had seen abuses of the home-schooling system, home-school children can succeed. She thanked the panel on their work addressing the needs of students with disabilities in Georgia and taking on the hard topics. She was concerned about holding students with profound disabilities accountable for mastery of standards and their need for functional life skills training. She asked if there was any possibility of not holding those students to addressing the common core standards. She also stated concerns related to assisting general education teachers with meeting the needs of the students with disabilities in their general education classrooms. She felt that they had so many areas they were responsible and would like to see more support for them in addressing the needs of the students with disabilities within their classroom.</p> <p>Carmen Allen, from Forsyth County, made public comment via phone call. The following is a summary of her comment.</p> <p>Mrs. Allen thanked the panel for the opportunity to give public comment via phone call and thanked the panel members who attend the meetings and work to meet the needs of students with disabilities. She stated she wanted to use her time to reflect on individuals who can't effectively advocate for themselves. She hoped that one day differences can be set aside and people can finally achieve respect for the differences among us all. She thanked the panel for their time and consideration.</p> <p>Two additional requests were made to make public comment by phone. However, the requesting individuals declined to make public comment when contacted by phone during the public comment time at this meeting.</p> |

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| 4:30 – 5:00 | Panel Standing Committees | Panel member were asked to sign-up for the standing committees for the State Advisory Panel. Panel members signed up to work on each committee and times were set to meet the following morning to discuss the needs of the specific committees. Panel members who were not present at this meeting will be assigned to committees. |
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September 16, 2011

| Time | Events | |
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| 7:00 – 8:00 | CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST (provided) | |
| 8:00 – 9:15 | Committee Meetings | All committees met. |
| 9:15 – 10:00 | Committee Reports | <p>Nancy Woods, panel Chair, opened the meeting.</p> <p>Committees reported to the panel on current activities and recommendations.</p> <p><i>Public Comment Committee:</i> The committee reported that 2 public comments were made the previous day. Both individuals will receive a letter thanking them for their comments. As a follow-up to the comment made by Patricia Bloch, additional information will be sought at a later panel meeting related for an update on the new alternate assessment being developed for the common core. Information will also be sought on professional development for general education and special education teachers to assist them in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.</p> <p><i>Family Engagement Committee:</i> The committee stated that they had several areas they would like to investigate. They continue to be concerned regarding the parent surveys that are sent to districts. They would like to contact Patty Solomon to gather information on how districts are chosen, whether the selection process is data driven and whether they could see the results of the surveys. Debbie Gay, Director of the Division for Special Education Services and Supports explained how districts were selected by statistical rubric process. The committee would also like to get current information on parent participation in IEP meetings. Lastly, the committee would like to develop a fact sheet with top 25 acronyms used along with definitions of what those acronyms meant.</p> <p><i>Dispute Resolution Committee:</i> The committee reviewed one case that had been determined since the last panel meeting. The case involved a parent’s refusal to allow a comprehensive evaluation by the school district, with family only desiring Occupational and Physical Therapy services. The school</p> |

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| | | <p>district did not agree and the case went to court. The decision of the court was that the school district is required to educate the student, therefore should have the right to evaluate. The ruling directed the parent to consent to a comprehensive evaluation or remove the student from special education services.</p> <p>The committee also looked at dispute resolution trend data from Georgia. They reviewed data from 2007-2011 and noted that the number of complaints filed has increased. Mediations were high in 2007 and slowly trended downward until 2011, when the number increased.</p> <p><i>Policies and Procedures Committee:</i> The committee reviewed the policies and procedures for the State Advisory Panel. They determined that the section needs to be examined and reworked in order to eliminate duplication in the procedures. For example, membership appears in 3 places and should be contained in one area. The committee will continue work on this at the next meeting and report to the panel at the November meeting. It was also recommended that the section on Public Comment be revised immediately. This section lists ways that public comment can be made; however, the option of making comment by phone call is not included. Procedures have been established for this method of making comment and needs to be added to the public comment section in the procedures. The committee also recommended changing the title from “Policies and Procedures” to “Operating Procedures”. The panel agreed to the recommendations to add procedures for making public comment by phone and changing the title of the section. The panel will review additional changes made to the procedures at the next panel meeting.</p> |
| 10:00 – 10:15 | BREAK | |
| 10:15 – 11:00 | GaDOE Website Update | <p>Sally Kempf reviewed updates to the GaDOE Division for Special Education Services and Supports webpage.</p> <p>Mrs. Kempf discussed the organization of the GaDOE and the Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports (DSESS) webpages. She demonstrated the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to find State Board of Education policies on the GaDOE home page • how to locate class size postings for FY12 on the GaDOE home page • how to find common core standards on the GaDOE and the Curriculum home pages • how to get to Elluminate sessions for the common core standards and testing as well as the Elluminate training |

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| | | <p>schedule for the Division for Special Education Services and Supports (DSESS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to locate materials for the State Advisory Panel on the DSESS webpage • how to access the parent rights videos from the DSESS, Dispute Resolution and Family Engagement home pages • how to find dispute resolution decisions from the DSESS webpage • the location of the Parent Mentor website – www.parentmentor.org <p>Questions and comments were taken from the panel.</p> |
| 11:00 – 12:00 | District Determinations | <p>Kachelle White presented on proposed changes to the district determination process.</p> <p>Mrs. White discussed the requirement from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) which requires that states make determinations on school district’s performance. She reviewed the previous district determination form and the complexity and issues related to that form. The types of determination outcome for districts were also discussed.</p> <p>A stakeholders group was convened this past summer to review the form and elements that needed to be developed to look at district determinations. Other states determination procedures were reviewed and it was found that other states considered only the required compliance indicators rather than both compliance and performance indicators. Based on this information and information from the stakeholders group, Georgia will focus on compliance indicators to identify a district’s determination level. Performance indicators will continue to be used as a part of a district’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).</p> <p>A draft of the new determinations form and the indicators that would be utilized in the new form were reviewed with the panel.</p> <p>Questions and comments were taken from the panel.</p> |
| 12:00 – 1:00 | LUNCH (provided) | |
| 1:00 – 2:00 | Shifting Trends on Special Education | Debbie Gay presented a review of the Fordham Institute report “Shifting Trends in Special Education” by Janie Scull and Amber M. Winkler. |

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| | | <p>Mrs. Gay provided a summary of the information in the Fordham Institute Report which shows nationwide data on special education. The latest data in the report is from 2009-2010.</p> <p>She stated that the total number of students receiving special education services fell from 6.72 million students in 2004-2005 to 6.48 million students in 2009-2010. Specific Learning Disabilities dropped the most with declines also seen in Intellectual Disabilities and Emotional Disturbances. Increases were noted in the area of Autism with the number of students increasing from 93,000 to 378,000 students. The Other Health Impaired category also increased from 303,000 to 689,000 students.</p> <p>Georgia data as compared to a US average was discussed. Georgia data showed the percentage of students receiving special education services at 10.45% as compared to the US average of 13.14%.</p> <p>The cost of educating students with disabilities was reviewed. The cost continues to increase with approximately 85% of spending used for personnel supporting students with disabilities. In 2008-2009, Georgia employed 169 teachers/paraprofessionals per 1000 students. The national average was 129 teachers/paraprofessionals per 1000 students.</p> <p>The total percentage of education costs per state devoted to students with disabilities was discussed. Georgia's percentage is 1.28%. The national average was a median of 1.0 and all states are ranked off of that median.</p> <p>Panel members can access a copy of the Fordham report at http://www.edexcellence.net/publications-issues/publications/shifting-trends-in-special.html</p> <p>Questions and comments were taken from the panel.</p> |
| 2:00 – 3:00 | State Advisory Panel Planning for Future Meetings | <p>Panel members provided input on topics for future meetings. The following topics were suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project Search ● Appleseed report ● Ohlmstead decision/Ohlmstead Act ● Best strategies for transitioning from middle to HS ● Bridge Bill ● Update from vocational rehab – agreements between school districts and voc rehab |

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| | <p>The November meeting will involve SPP/APR review and school visit to the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf.</p> <p>The meeting was adjourned by Nancy Woods, Chair.</p> |

Please note that the times listed above are approximate and may change except the public comment period. Every effort is made to begin the public comment at the appointed time. Pursuant to Panel procedures, a full 30 minutes is always allowed even if the start has been delayed. Comment time is limited to 5 minutes per speaker so that all have a chance to be heard. For individuals desiring to make comment via telephone conference call, comment time needs to be scheduled with the SAP Chair a minimum of 3 business days prior to the meeting.