



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION



STATE ADVISORY PANEL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

2014 ANNUAL REPORT



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STATE ADVISORY PANEL
ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

2014 - 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Findings, Analysis and Recommendations:
A Review of Education Programs and Services for Students
with Disabilities in the District of Columbia

July 21, 2015



THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE ADVISORY PANEL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

July 21, 2015

The Honorable Muriel Bowser, Mayor

The District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Jennifer Niles, Deputy Mayor of Education

Office of the Deputy Mayor of Education
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 303
Washington, DC 20004

Hansuel Kang, State Superintendent of Education

Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)
810 First Street, NE – 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20002

Jack Jacobson, President

District of Columbia State Board of Education
441 4th Street, NW Suite 723
Washington, DC 20001

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Mayor Bowser, Councilmember Mendelson, Deputy Mayor of Education Niles, State Superintendent of Education Kang, and State Board of Education President Jacobson:

The State Advisory Panel on Special Education (SAP Panel) is pleased to deliver its 2014-2015 Annual Report.

The SAP serves as an advisory body to the Mayor, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the District's State Education Agency (SEA), on matters pertaining to the education of children and youth with disabilities served by public and private agencies in the District of Columbia.

The Panel's primary responsibility is to advise OSSE and its Division of Elementary, Secondary and Specialized Education (ESSE) on unmet needs of students with disabilities, including the development of evaluations, reports, and corrective action plans in response to federal monitoring. It also provides policy guidance and recommendations regarding procedures to coordinate education and related services for students with disabilities, using its members' personal expertise and experiences as present and past consumers or providers of the State's services.

A summary of our activities, findings and recommendations are included in this report. We wish to commend and thank the leadership of OSSE for its administrative support, as well as ongoing communication and involvement with the Panel as they developed innovative or enhanced policies, procedures and programs. This was an unusual year which included many changes in OSSE's leadership and liaison to the Panel. In addition, there was a noticeable decline in the active participation of a number of appointed Panel members, particularly those who were to represent the important child-serving state agencies. While change is almost always very disruptive to an organization and supporters, there was no change in the Panel's commitment to serve students with educational challenges and their families.

As Chairperson, I wish to thank Daryl Gorman, the outgoing Director of DC Boards and Commissions; our long serving OSSE-ESSE's staff liaison, Desirée Brown, Special Projects Manager, Community and Parent Relations; as well as panel members: Ja'Sent Brown, Julie Camerata, Betsy Clyde Centofanti, Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas, Elizabeth Rihani, Rebecca Salon, Shawn Ullman, and Molly Whalen, all of whom went beyond the call of duty to ensure the Panel's success. In addition, we are very appreciative of the attention and efforts of our newly appointed OSSE/SAP Contact, Sheryl Hamilton, Director of Community Learning and School Support (CLASS) Unit and Justin D. Lawson, Associate Director in the Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments (MOTA) who is providing outstanding support to the Panel as we begin a new year.

In order to ensure that our time was used most efficiently, the panel worked closely with OSSE-ESSE, on issues that they identified as needing the most attention. We commend the positive forward progress that the staff of OSSE-ESSE has made this year in: policy formation,

implementation of Hearing Officer Determinations (HODs), Early Childhood Transition and Transportation. It is clear that these positive efforts are creating stability in a system which has had a long history of instability, and noncompliance, with the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

While the June 30, 2015, US Department of Education Determination Letter to Superintendent Kang still indicated a “Needs Intervention Determination” for the State, it also noted substantial progress in areas which have been problematic since the early 1970s. We look forward to helping the Agency continue to address the critical issues which need correction.

More importantly, we pledge to monitor the continued implementation of such policies and practices, and to advocate for improved quality of the services which are now provided. It is important that there is widespread involvement and commitment throughout the City, if work of the Panel is to be meaningful. Therefore, it is imperative that the 2015-2016 Panel build upon the work of this year, and continue to focus on key areas within special education which demand ongoing review and problem solving. Because time constraints on parents and volunteers are more pressing than ever, recruitment and use of these valuable volunteers must be decidedly different from the original 1970s SAP model.

The appointments, roles, responsibilities and configuration of future SAPs must be reexamined, so that the greatest number of concerned constituents can fully participate. MOTA has already begun the important work of identifying and appointing new stakeholders who are ready to join the team.

It has been my pleasure to serve as Chair of this dynamic, caring group of Panel members.

Respectfully Submitted,

Senora D. Simpson, Chair

District of Columbia

State Advisory Panel on Special Education

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I. OVERVIEW

This 2014 Annual Report of the State Advisory Panel on Special Education for the District of Columbia is respectfully submitted to the Mayor and Council of the District of Columbia. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (Authority) 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(21)(A)) CFR 34 Part 300 §300.167, requires that the state establish and maintain an advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state. The State Advisory Panel for the District of Columbia is appointed by the Mayor and is composed of members from the public and private sectors – including parents of children with disabilities, advocates, representatives of state agencies and educators - representing a wide variety of perspectives and interests related to the education of children with disabilities. Throughout the year, Panel members meet to discuss, review and analyze issues relevant to the education of children and youth with disabilities in the District of Columbia. This report summarizes the activities and recommendations of the District’s State Advisory Panel for the period of time from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015.

According to the official Child Count, conducted annually by each LEA and certified to OSSE, there were 12,173 students receiving services under IDEA.

The purpose of this report is to provide policymakers, educators, parents, and the general public with an overview of the major concerns and issues raised and reviewed by the members of the Panel during the 2014-15 terms and to provide recommendations and benchmarks for future, necessary improvement in Special Education which can be used by succeeding panels.

A published copy of this report is made available by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and is located on the OSSE website: <http://osse.dc.gov>.

II. PURPOSE, FUNCTION, AND COMPOSITION OF THE STATE ADVISORY PANEL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

Purpose and Functions

As detailed in the Mayor's Order 2012-48, effective April 5, 2012 the purpose of the District of Columbia's State Advisory Panel on Special Education ("the Panel") is to serve as an advisory body to the Mayor, the District of Columbia Public Schools and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE - formerly the State Education Office) on matters pertaining to the education of children and youth with disabilities served by public and private agencies of the District of Columbia.

Functions of the panel include, but are not limited to: advising on unmet needs of students with disabilities, reporting to the US Department of Education, developing corrective action plans, education of students with disabilities incarcerated in adult prisons, and coordination and delivery of special education and related services; reviewing and commenting on proposed legislation, regulations, and policies, as well as the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report; and preparing an annual report of its activities and recommendations for the Mayor, OSSE, and other District agencies.

Composition of the Panel

The SAP is appointed by the Mayor through the Office of Boards and Commissions. The Panel consists of at least 15 voting members, the majority of whom must be parents of children with disabilities or individuals with disabilities. Other members of the SAP include representatives from schools, District agencies that serve children and community organizations that demonstrate an interest in issues affecting special education.

(See Appendix A for a complete list of Panelists and their area of representation.)

III. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Panel is required to convene at least four (4) meetings each calendar year. The schedule of meetings for the school year 2014-15 was as follows:

- November 13, 2014 10:00-12:00
- March 27, 2015 10:00-12:00
- May 21, 2015 10:00-12:00

In school year 2014-15, the SAP discussed concerns regarding waning participation among panel members and agreed to move to a quarterly schedule, using virtual meetings when possible. Because the Spring meeting was postponed until May 2015, it became difficult to accommodate a Summer meeting prior to the end of the school year that would not have redundant content. Accordingly, the yearend report was completed via electronic communication.

IV. ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. PRIORITIES

The Panel launched its 2014-15 activities and efforts on Thursday, November 21, 2014, with a focus on providing input on the **State Performance Plan** for Special Education and for the **State Systemic Improvement Plan**, a strategic plan mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 2004.

State Performance Plan (SPP)

The District of Columbia **SPP** for Special Education specifies the process that all Local Education Agencies must follow to identify, evaluate and serve all children with disabilities who are residents of the District of Columbia. In accordance with IDEA, the SPP specifies how the District of Columbia will evaluate its efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEA and its work to improve student performance/ achievement. This six-year plan requires the completion and publication of annual performance reports that measure DC's progress in meeting targets established in the SPP.

State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)

In order to shift States' focus from one of solely compliance to results for students with disabilities, the US Department of Education changed some requirements for the SPP, beginning this year. This change is manifested in a new indicator in the SPP, indicator 17. Indicator 17 of the Plan is now a comprehensive, multi-year State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), designed to focus States on improving results for students with disabilities. In Federal Fiscal Year 2014, the SSIP was initiated to push States to take a systemic approach to reform via a focus on one priority area. This new indicator revises the previous SPP design, which included multiple small improvement plans for each separate indicator in the SPP.

After extensive consultation with stakeholders, including the SAP, OSSE confirmed that increasing the graduation rates of students with disabilities was the most urgent priority for DC. OSSE also determined that improving outcomes in this area would be best achieved through alignment of efforts and resources between the SEA's targets under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and IDEA.

As a result, OSSE created the following State- Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) for the DC SSIP:

The District of Columbia will increase the rate of graduation with a regular diploma for all students with disabilities with a focus on students who attend a high school that has a graduation rate of less than 50% for students with disabilities, and is also in Focus or Priority school status under the ESEA Flexibility waiver accountability system.

In the SSIP, OSSE outlines a tiered approach to reform: implementation of a set of “universal” strategies, or strategies that will be applied city-wide and available to all high schools, and a set of “targeted” strategies, or strategies specifically designed to more intensively address our most struggling high schools and the students served by them.

SSIP Universal Strategies:

- Establish state-level mobility workgroup to address the needs of highly mobile students
- Support special education community of practice for practitioners serving students with disabilities in secondary grades
- Create Master Teacher Cadre (MTC) of current teacher leaders who are identified to provide peer-to-peer coaching in high school classrooms serving students with disabilities
- Provide professional development in evidence-based school-wide support models (PBIS, RTI, UDL)

SSIP Targeted support (for SIMR subpopulation high schools and their neighborhood feeder schools):

- Eighth to Ninth Grade Orientation Activities
- Peer to Peer Mentoring
- Coordinated Case Review (between middle and high school special education staff to support smooth entry for students with disabilities)
- Check and Connect Program (or similar)

The SAP looks forward to supporting OSSE with implementation of the SSIP plan beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

B. STATE ADVISORY PANEL GOALS

In recent years, District efforts have focused on developing a strong accountability system with the capacity to store and manage timely, accurate and accessible data to inform compliance-based analyses. Accordingly, compliance rates have significantly improved in the District of Columbia. In SY2014-15, OSSE sought to rewrite state goals to align with a results driven theory of action and sought input from the SAP to ensure input from critical stakeholders was addressed.

In addition, the Panel identified the issue of waning Panel participation as an ongoing challenge to the work of the committee. Accordingly, the Panel addressed the following in SY 2014-15:

1. State Performance Plan (SPP)
2. State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)
3. Role and Membership of the SAP

C. PANEL ACTIVITIES

The Panel:

- Supported OSSE's development of the SSIP, as outlined above.
- Received regular updates from Dr. Amy Maisterra, Assistant Superintendent, ESSE.
- Received advance notice and provided input regarding OSSE's proposed revisions to Title 5-E, Chapter 30 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR).
- Reviewed and approved the SAP 2013-2014 Annual Report.
- Partnered with OSSE to create awareness of information sharing activities in the local community including SSIP development, roll-out of the District's new online assessments, requirements related to secondary transition compliance, student-led IEPs, and the annual special education service delivery parent survey.

V. REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As compelling issues such as transportation, timely issuance of Individualized Education Plans, and appropriate service provision were effectively addressed, many panel members were no longer actively engaged. In the 2015-2016 year, SAP members will be working with OSSE to implement the SSIP and will be recruiting additional SAP members, with a special focus on families and youth/adults with disabilities who have successfully transitioned from school to adult life. The SAP will also look at establishing parent cabinets in each ward is a possibility

APPENDIX A

Members of the Panel consist of representatives from both public and private sectors who by virtue of their position, interest and training can contribute to the education of children with disabilities. A majority (51%) of the members of the Panel must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities.

Appointed Panel Members:

Senora Simpson -- *Chair / Parent*

Acquaviva, Kim -- Parent

Brown, Ja'Sent -- OSSE - Homeless Education State Coordinator

Camerata, Julie -- Community Organization

Clyde Centofanti, Betsy -- Parent

Ernst, Kimberly -- Parent

Fitzgerald, Timothy -- Child and Family Services Agency

Hiligh-Thomas, Rochanda -- Parent

Kent, Martha -- Parent

LeConte, Pamela -- Institution of Higher Education

Morilus-Black, Marie -- DC Department of Behavioral Health

Morse, Elisabeth -- DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

Munter, Tony -- Parent Quinn, John -- Parent

Reid-Witt, Karla -- Parent

Rihani, Elizabeth -- Parent

Rodgers, Yvette -- Parent

Salon, Rebecca -- DC Department on Disability Services

Sauls, Claudia -- Parent

Settle, Kaitlin -- Teacher - DC Public Schools Ullman, Shawn -- University Legal Services

Whalen, Molly -- Parent

Notes:

[illegible]



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