

# For Those Who Care...

*A Newsletter from the West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children*

“For Teachers and Friends of Exceptional Children”

Summer - Fall, 2009

Edited by Michael Sullivan, Ed.D.  
*Executive Director*

## Recommendations Spark Interest

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and State Code 18-20-6, the West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children is required to advise through its *Annual Report*, the State Legislature, the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Schools, and the public concerning the unmet needs of exceptional children and to make recommendations as it may deem proper.

The following identifies the foremost unmet educational needs of exceptional children as perceived by the Council. The intent of these recommendations is to meet the Council's mandate to identify unmet needs of the state's exceptional students and to do that in a fashion that maximizes the potential of existing resources to improve services. Recommendations, by category, include the following:

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Autism Licensure**

Public hearings conducted across the state this year revealed considerable concern with the Policy 5202 provision allowing the addition of the Autism endorsement without the requirement for the clinical and field experiences required by Policy 5100. The result has been the issuance of the Autism endorsement without the usual validation of teacher skills required in all other areas of licensure. The Council therefore recommends that existing policy be revised to ensure that those obtaining Autism licensure meet the same practicum experiences as those required for all other specializations.

- **Mental Health**

The Advisory Council continues to hear testimony regarding the inadequate level of school-based mental health support for students with emotional and/or behavioral problems and the school personnel who serve them. Recognizing that this is a basic right of students with disabilities, the Council recommends that the Department of Education convene a task force to examine interagency efforts to date, move with all possible speed to develop a tiered approach based on Positive Behavior Support principles, and then develop the policy recommendations needed to establish appropriate school-based services.

- **Secondary Transition**

The Advisory Council applauds the Department efforts to gather and analyze survey data collected from exiting students, their parents and former students related to the provision of transition services. Nevertheless, the State Annual Performance Report data indicate that the IEP's of almost thirty percent of West Virginia students with disabilities did not meet the federal criteria for documenting appropriate transition goals and services. While improvement over the previous year was positively noted, the Council recommends that the Department update the Council on

the status of the plan and activities designed to meet this federal requirement for exiting students.

- **Parent Training**

The number of local school districts supporting Parent-Educator Resource Centers has decreased from forty to thirty-six, a trend inconsistent with the Department goal of improving the level of parent involvement. Testimony has included mention of the need for parent training in the areas of:

- Autism (Autism Diagnostic Observation System)
- Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)
- Parallel training for parents on Response to Intervention, Differentiated Instruction and the new, web-based IEP process

In addition, the Council recommends that Federal stimulus funds be used as seed money to establish centers in districts not having them.

- **Professional Development**

Testimony received this year regarding Special Education monitoring indicated that considerable differences exist regarding the eligibility criteria used for qualifying students for Extended School Year services and also regarding what should be properly included in these services. The Council would therefore recommend that training related to these issues be provided to local school districts by the Department of Education.

- **Free Appropriate Public Education**

IDEIA requires that the Department of Education ensure that all

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### WVACEEC MEETING DATES ANNOUNCED

In order to meet its mandate under the individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Advisory Council meets regularly in different geographic areas of the state. The charge of the Council is to identify, and make recommendations, regarding matters pertaining to the education of exceptional children in West Virginia. Upcoming meeting dates for 2009-2010 include:

September 17-18	Webster County (RESA IV)
October 15-16	Ohio County (RESA VI)
November 5-6	Gilmer County (RESA VII)
December 3-4	Calhoun County (RESA V)
January 21-22	Lincoln County (RESA II)
March 18-19	Raleigh County (RESA I)
May 6-7	Kanawha County (RESA III)
June TBA	Hampshire County (RESA VIII)

**Recommendations:**

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children with disabilities meet the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act. The Advisory Council commends the Department of Education for developing a monitoring process to ensure the provision of appropriate services to disabled children meeting the definition of homeless under this Act. The Council would recommend, however, that the Department of Education implement the new process designed to ensure that these students are provided a free, appropriate public education, that local school districts are providing surrogate parents for students needing them and that both surrogate and foster parents receive the training needed to function effectively in these roles.

**COUNCIL MEMBER RETIRES**

The Advisory Council would like to express its heartfelt thanks to TyEllen Strauch. TyEllen is a Berkeley County resident, a parent of a special needs child and two-term Council member. She has devoted countless hours in support of the Council and its charge to identify the unmet needs of exceptional children in West Virginia. Her leadership, expertise and hard work will be missed.

**COUNCIL OFFICERS SELECTED**

The Council would like to announce the unanimous selections of officers for 2009-10. Ron Cantley, a Raleigh County school administrator will again serve as chair. John Taylor, a parent and higher education representative from Lewis County, was named Chair-elect. Please join us in welcoming them to their leadership positions.

**HELP!**

The Advisory Council is in the process of expanding the circulation of *For Those Who Care...* If you have a friend, or know of an organization not on our distribution list, simply contact our office. The most current copy of the newsletter will be forwarded immediately.

The Council office may be contacted during regular business hours. The office is located at the Marshall University Graduate College in South Charleston. The Advisory Council maintains a toll-free number (1-800-642-3642) for your convenience and may also be contacted locally at 746-2027 or 746-2076.

**EDITORIAL POLICY**

*For Those Who Care...* is a quarterly newsletter which attempts to disseminate current information regarding the delivery of educational services to exceptional children. The Advisory Council regrets that, due to lack of space and budgetary restrictions, the newsletter cannot reprint articles submitted for publication. However, the Council welcomes all correspondence reflecting the concerns of any person or group interested in the education of exceptional children. The receipt of communications will be acknowledged and provided to all council members for consideration at the next scheduled meeting.

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 So. Charleston, WV  
 Permit No. 1093

**West Virginia Advisory Council for  
 the Education of Exceptional Children  
 c/o Marshall University Graduate College  
 100 Angus E. Peyton Drive  
 South Charleston, WV 25303-1600**