

2013-2014
ANNUAL REPORT

of the

West Virginia
Advisory Council

for the

Education of

Exceptional Children



July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

Preface

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) requires each state to have an Advisory Panel. The West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children (WVACEEC) is also mandated by State Code 18-20-6. The Council is charged in part with advising decision makers regarding the unmet needs of exceptional children. The mission adopted by the Council is to influence the State Board of Education, public policy makers, and West Virginia's citizens in ways that continuously improve educational outcomes for children with exceptionalities. The Council is composed of members appointed by the State Superintendent of Schools.

Council Members, 2013-2014

Patricia Homberg	Charleston, WV (Kanawha)	State Agency Representative
Vincent Schmidt	Wheeling, WV (Ohio)	Parent, Private School
Melanie Hummel	Moundsville, WV (Marshall)	Parent, Juvenile Corrections
Rebecca Derenge	Charleston, WV (Kanawha)	McKinney-Vento (HEARTH Act)
Lynn Boyer	Romney, WV (Hampshire)	Schools for the Deaf and the Blind
Sandra Boggs	Charleston, WV (Kanawha)	Superintendent Representative
Kathy Stonemark	Fayetteville, WV (Fayette)	Parent
Jeff McCroskey	Amma, WV (Roane)	Transition Service Teacher
Teresa McDonough	Charleston, WV (Kanawha)	DHHR WV Birth To Three
Kimberly Rodes	Hinton, WV (Summers)	Administrator, Special Education
Lorie Fitzwater	Hurricane, WV (Putnam)	Parent, Teacher, Special Education
Patricia Haberbosch	Clarksburg, WV (Harrison)	WV Parent Training Information

Council Staff

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The activities of the West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children are supported and funded by a grant from the West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Special Programs.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The Advisory Council plans and initiates a variety of activities in order to meet its charge and achieve its mission. The Council:

- schedules and conducts regional meetings across the state to seek input and gain information about programs and services for exceptional students.
- informs local media, local and regional special education administrators, Parent Educator Resource Centers, principals, superintendents, school board members, school improvement councils, faculty senates and community members about scheduled meetings.
- provides a forum for programs to be showcased and issues to be identified.
- develops and shares a newsletter and the Annual Report recommendations with the State Board of Education, Legislature, schools, and members of the public.
- reviews and comments on proposed policies, regulations and procedures affecting children with exceptionalities.
- provides a part-time staff to ensure access to the Council.
- participates in related special education activities.
- interacts with the Federal Verification Team of the federal Office of Special Education Programs and participates in developing Corrective Action Plans.
- assigns members to various state committees and task forces.
- provides practical information to parents on how to deal with concerns.
- participates in meetings with other groups associated with providing special education services.
- serves as a stakeholder group for the development of the State Performance Plan and the Annual Performance Report, both required by federal law.
- cooperates and collaborates with the Office of Special Programs (OSP) of the West Virginia Department of Education and other public and private agencies to address the unmet needs of students with exceptionalities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Although the Council is charged with identifying the unmet needs of children with exceptionalities, it is important to recognize that there are also many parents, families, educators, and other agencies working together to ensure access to the benefits of public education. Examples include, but are by no means limited to:

PARENTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Enormous gratitude is extended to all the parents, families and community members committed to support and improve services for all students. Special thanks are due to all those community members who provided testimony at Council's public hearings this year, especially Legal Aid of WV: Family Advocacy Support Training and Behavioral Health Advocacy; Northwood Health Services: Family Waiver Assistance; Youth Services Systems, Inc.: substance abuse and delinquency programs; WV Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Marshall County Parent Educator Resource Center. The WV Council of Administrators of Special Education (WV CASE) is commended to establishing a mentor program for novice special education administrators. Through communication and collaboration, communities, families, agencies and districts continue to find creative ways to link families and services.

COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Of the seven school systems visited this year, all should be commended for their efforts to increase the level of student achievement and increase the graduation rate for students. Noteworthy efforts include extensive professional development opportunities, interagency collaboration, specialized training for new special education teachers, monthly support groups, computer/technology assisted instruction and enhanced collaboration with institutions of higher education. Districts were able to articulate how they use the Annual Desk Audit system to identify needs and take corrective actions to meet the needs of all students with exceptionalities. County administrators were highly complimentary of the supportive role of the Office of Special Programs. While noting that compliance is essential for accountability, districts appear to be poised for changes that promote "results driven accountability" through Support for Personalized Learning and Support for Specially Designed Instruction. Districts continue to partner with external agencies for the benefit of transient and transitional students, especially in the area of mental health. All of these efforts strengthen the capacity of school systems to provide a free appropriate public education to exceptional students in West Virginia.

The Council would like to commend Mercer, Berkeley and Kanawha Counties for their efforts to ensure that students are prepared for life and work after they leave the school setting. Marshall County is commended for its extensive interagency network to support students with emotional and social challenges. Upshur County is commended for Project Graduation in collaboration with West Virginia Wesleyan, Glenville State University, local businesses, parents and the judiciary. Braxton County is commended for maintaining community schools for elementary age students. Ritchie County is commended for the home – school communication network.

It is further noted that collaboration between districts and private/parochial schools, especially the Catholic Schools of WV, continues to expand opportunities for all students with exceptionalities through dialog, professional development and direct services.

REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCIES

RESAs and their respective special education administrators continue to provide valuable training, targeted technical assistance and support for school improvement activities at the local school and district level. RESAs provide a tremendous variety of staff development activities during the school year, summer institutes and academies in partnership with the Office of Special Programs. In collaboration with Technical Assistance Specialists (TAS), they provide support for teachers on the Next Generation Standards and Objectives, differentiated instruction and universal design for instruction. All RESAs are engaged in Crisis Prevention Institute (non-violent crisis management) annual training and recertification as required by State Board Policy 4373, online IEP support, Common Core Essential and Community Elements for the 1% population of students with disabilities. Additionally, they promote effective co-teaching and inclusion practices to ensure students are taught by highly qualified teachers. Given the forthcoming changes in the national standards, the role of RESAs is expected to continue to expand as the demands for support and training for teachers becomes ever more vital for student success and achievement.

WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Office of Special Programs is to be commended for fostering partnerships with state, regional and national technical assistance centers. Having recognized the critical problem of teacher recruitment and retention, OSP has partnered with the National Center to Inform Policy and Practice (NCIPP) and WV Colleges and Universities. Partnership with the University of Cincinnati for the credentialing of speech/language pathologists will relieve some of the shortage of professionals in this area. Inter-departmental collaboration with the Office of Healthy Schools has resulted in the addition of two coordinators to address the 2013 recommendation that OSP strengthen support for districts regarding provision of mental health services to school age children. Collaboration with the Autism Training Center, specifically to address concerns about positive school climate will benefit all students. The Autism Teacher Outreach Training Project has had significant impact on the quality of instruction to children with Autism. The Council supports the on-going need for teacher training related to research-based strategies through summer academies.

The continued expansion of the Technology Integration Specialists (TIS) and Technical Assistance Support Specialists will insure that teachers are prepared to use and teach 21st Century curricula and technology to students, especially critical for the implementation of new assessments. Collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Resources: Birth to Three is ensuring that appropriate services are available to three year olds as they enter public school. Additionally, work with DHHR addresses concerns about student placements in appropriate out-of-state facilities through joint monitoring by OSP and DHHR.

The Council once again had the privilege of serving as one of the stakeholder groups for the

federal State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR), both required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004). Additionally, members of the Council participated in a review of state policy changes, especially Policy 2419.

Interdepartmental collaboration between the Offices of School Improvement, Federal Programs and Special Programs facilitates work on the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver to provide support for RESAs, Focus, Priority and Success Schools.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Council applauds the West Virginia Board of Education for its leadership in setting strategic goals for school improvement and for developing the policy structure and accountability measure necessary to achieve them. Such leadership, coupled with policy oversight and ongoing professional development has provided many new opportunities to improve achievement for all students. The Council notes particularly the WV Schools for the Deaf and the Blind extensive outreach to children, families and their teachers in local districts. The availability of the WVSDB as a statewide resource assists WV counties and parents in making crucial decisions for children with hearing or vision losses. The Council is especially appreciative of the thoughtful response to each of the recommendations contained in this report each year.

ALL STAKEHOLDERS

The Council would like to recognize the collaborative efforts of parents and the entire educational community for the increased level of intensive early instructional support services for all students. While employment opportunities and population in rural counties are declining and border counties are growing, the impact is felt in a number of ways: recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, limited community based work experiences for high school students, and lack of community health and behavioral health specialists. These pose tremendous challenges for small, medium and large counties in meeting the needs of all students.

LONG-STANDING CONCERNS

Many of Council's past recommendations have been addressed in the form of professional development academies and development of guidance documents. Effort and energy continue to be provided by the West Virginia Department of Education and Office of Special Programs (OSP) to move these initiatives closer to completion. It is important to recognize that the concerns listed here tend to be perennial in nature because they are so difficult to fully resolve:

- Retention and recruitment of highly qualified special education teachers is increasingly a problem for districts due to the large number of teachers reaching retirement age. Teacher turnover impacts quality of instruction and recurring professional development needs for compliance issues and best instructional practices. Collaboration with institutions of higher education is applauded. However, licensure of personnel requirements in Policy 5202 remains a concern especially for teachers of students with the most significant needs and early childhood educators.
- Expansion of effective and appropriate co-teaching models is critical to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum and opportunity to meet grade level standards of achievement.
- Encouragement of parent involvement and participation in educational decisions is necessary for developing relationships between schools, community providers and parents. Schools and districts can foster rapport within teams and seek alternate methods of information sharing which are relevant to parents.
- While students are entitled to receive their education in the least restrictive environment, consideration must be given to addressing all of the distinctions that make learning different for students with disabilities, including access to specialized and intensive instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The content of this section of the report was based on testimony requested by Council or received during public hearings within the past year. A listing of individuals who provided that testimony is located elsewhere in this document. 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 resources to improve services. Citations, noted in italics following the recommendations, reflect legislative and gubernatorial efforts to provide all West Virginia students with a comprehensive education leading to lifelong learning and success. Recommendations, based on guidance from the United States Department of Education and results of data analysis in the State Performance Report, include the following:

- **Support for Personalized Learning through Results Driven Accountability**

The achievement gap between special education and general education students in English/language arts and mathematics is persistent and improving educational outcomes for these students requires recognition that planning and instruction must be individualized. Consideration must be given to curriculum content, appropriate instruction and valid assessments. Personalized learning requires that all areas of student need are addressed including needs associated with multiple diagnoses. The Council acknowledges the work of the WVDE through the ESEA Flexibility Waiver in identification of focus, priority and support schools. It is evident from the diagnostic visit reports that collaboration between WVDE, RESAs and Districts has identified specific targets to aid in closing the achievement gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities.

The Council recommends the Office of Special Programs continue to provide professional development to enhance team teaching, increase student engagement and promote parent involvement with a focus on results of student performance over time. Additionally, the Council recommends that OSP pursue creative means to address scheduling flexibility for team collaboration, data analysis and collective problem solving.

- **Work Exploration and Experience Opportunities**

Students with disabilities who are preparing for transition from school to work, higher education and community life are faced with many challenges and choices. At every meeting of the Council this year, members heard about successful work experience programs and barriers to successful transition, including access to transportation and inter-agency linkages. Three students addressed the Council and described how their work experiences are motivating them to stay in school, building self-confidence and setting goals for their futures. Research and experience demonstrate that vocational opportunities matched to individual interest and aptitude have a positive effect on school attendance and reduce the potential for students to dropout. Indicators on the State Performance Report, graduation rates, dropout rates and transition goal setting in individualized education programs, reflect that additional training is needed for teachers

to help students make appropriate choices and identify the supports they will need after leaving school. It has been demonstrated that early development of family relationships promotes natural transitions. **The Council recommends that the West Virginia Department of Education and the Office of Special Programs support all districts in their effort to replicate proven successful work experience opportunities and provide professional development to teachers to build agency and family linkages.**

SB 359 (8) Aligned public school with post-secondary and workplace readiness programs and standards. – An educational system in the 21st Century should be seen as a continuum from the public school (prekindergarten through twelve) program through post-secondary education. In order to be successful in a global competitive marketplace, learning should be an ongoing, life-long experience. Thus, the public schools and the institutions of post-secondary education in West Virginia should create a system of common standards, expectations and accountability. Creating such an aligned system will enhance opportunities for success and assure a seamless educational process for West Virginia students.

- **Community Schools to Address Behavioral and Mental Health**

Information provided to the Council by the public and professionals communicated a growing concern for psychological and social-emotional needs of students. During the 2013 legislative session, Governor Tomblin sponsored several key education reform initiatives, one of which was Community School Partnerships. Community school refers to a public school that participates in a community-based effort to coordinate and integrate educational, developmental, family, health, and other comprehensive services through community-based organizations and public/private partnerships. This model, in conjunction with expanded school mental health projects, appears feasible to sustain a statewide system of support for students with behavioral/emotional issues. The National Assembly on School-Based Health Care (NASBHC) cites numerous benefits of community school partnerships including access to mental health care, decrease in absenteeism and tardiness, decrease in school discipline referrals, improved academic performance, and meaningful parent involvement. Twenty-two counties in West Virginia have mental health services through community partnerships.

The Council recommends that the West Virginia Department of Education increase collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Resources, the Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities and the WV School Health Technical Assistance Center to establish resources in every county for community schools that support social/ emotional needs of students and families with emphasis on programs and services that focus on positive school climate and are based on evidence of positive outcomes.

SB 359 (5) School environments that promote safe, healthy and responsible behavior and provide an integrated system of student support services. – Each school should create an environment focused on student learning and one where students know they are valued, respected and safe. Furthermore, the school should incorporate programs and processes that instill healthy, safe and responsible behaviors and prepare students for interactions with individuals of diverse racial, ethnic and social backgrounds. School and district processes should include a focus on developing ethical and responsible character, personal dispositions that promote personal wellness through planned daily physical activity and healthy eating habits consistent with high nutritional guidelines and multicultural experiences that develop an appreciation of and respect for diversity

§18-3-12. Special Community Development School Pilot Program.

(a) The state superintendent shall establish a Special Community Development School Pilot Program to be implemented in a neighborhood of at least five public schools, which shall include at least one elementary and middle school, for the duration of five years. The neighborhood of public schools designated by the state superintendent for the pilot shall have significant enrollments of disadvantaged, minority and underachieving students. The designated neighborhood of public schools under the direction of the county board and county superintendent shall work in collaboration with higher education, community organizations, Center for Professional Development, local community leaders, affected classroom teachers, affected parents and the state board to develop and implement strategies that could be replicated in other public schools with significant enrollments of disadvantaged, minority and underachieving students to improve academic achievement.

INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

The following people attended Council meetings across the state during the past year. Some provided information, some expressed concerns as part of the informal meeting with the public and others made presentations because they had been included on the agenda. The Advisory Council expresses its gratitude for their candor and for the testimony which provides the basis for this report.

<u><i>Name</i></u>	<u><i>Position/Representing</i></u>	<u><i>Meeting Site</i></u>
Betsy Peterson	WVDE/PERC Parent Coordinator	Braxton County
Scott Cochran	Special Ed. Director, RESA 4	Braxton County
Judy Shafer	Director of Student Services	Braxton County
Dianna Bailey-Miller	Legal Aid Advocate	Braxton County
Brenda Lamkin	Parent	Upshur County
Gloria Shaffer	Legal Aid Parent Coordinator	Upshur County
Karen Ruddle	WVDE Coordinator	Upshur County
Douglas Auter	Rehabilitation Specialist	Upshur County
Tina Lou Edwards	Special Education Director	Upshur County
Shelby Haines	Director of Special Programs	Marshall County
Michael Hince	Superintendent	Marshall County
Joe Paolo	Special Ed. Director RESA 6	Marshall County
Woody Yoder	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Marshall County
Nikki Reid	Parent	Marshall County
Melodee Rader	Parent	Marshall County
Pat Elliott	Parent	Marshall County
Ashley Lucey	Client Coordinator	Marshall County
Bridget Remish	Legal Aid/FAST Advocate	Marshall County
Jodie Gardill	Legal Aid Associate Director	Marshall County
Elisa Hickman	Director of CQI	Marshall County
Angie Gessler	Student Assistance Counselor	Marshall County
Cathy Givens	PERC Parent Coordinator	Marshall County
Susie Baker	PERC Parent Coordinator	Marshall County
Annette Carey	Coordinator of Special Programs	Ritchie County
Kathy Roby	School Psychologist	Ritchie County
Kathy Hudnall	WVDE Coordinator	Ritchie County
Lanai Jennings	WVDE Coordinator OSP	Ritchie County
Ginger Huffman	WVDE Coordinator	Ritchie County
Todd Browning	Special Education Director	Mercer County
Ann Wells	Teacher	Mercer County
Robert "Greg" Bartlett	Special Ed. Director, RESA 1	Mercer County
Ghaski Browning	Assistant Dir. OSP-WVDE	Mercer County
Kathy Knighton	WVDE Coordinator	Mercer County
Paula Fields	WVDE Coordinator	Mercer County

Deana Cummings	Legal Aid Advocate	Mercer County
Melissa Hager	Legal Aid/FAST Attorney	Mercer County
Racine Stefancic	Parent	Mercer County
Deborah Haun	Principal	Mercer County
Gregory Furrow	Principal	Mercer County
Mark Peck	Special Education Specialist	Mercer County
Delia BenChaabane	Behavior Analyst/Autism	Mercer County
Sue Pelts	Special Education Specialist	Mercer County
Melissa Lipscomb	Special Education Specialist	Mercer County
Dreama Brumfield	Specialist	Mercer County
Robin Garrett	Specialist	Mercer County
Rebecca Cochran	Special Education Specialist	Mercer County
Rebecca West	Educational Audiologist	Mercer County
Karen Vannatter	Special Education Counselor	Mercer County
Emily Karnes	Supervisor of Special Education	Mercer County
Lynn Bayle	Assistant Director of Special Education	Mercer County
Margaret Wooden	Teacher	Berkeley County
Jennifer Kauffmann	Teacher	Berkeley County
Robert Edwards	Principal	Berkeley County
Hal Van Metre	Special Education Director	Berkeley County
Margaret Kursey	Assistant Superintendent	Berkeley County
Donna Van Metre	Principal	Berkeley County
Sallie Askin	Work Exploration	Berkeley County
Christine Church	Job Specialist	Berkeley County
Gloria Shaffer	Parent Coordinator, Legal Aid	Berkeley County
John Milliman	Special Ed. Director RESA 8	Berkeley County
Sarah Shveda	Tech. Assistance Support Specialist	Berkeley County
Dawn Embrey King	Special Ed. Director RESA 3	Kanawha County
Natalie Laliberty	Principal	Kanawha County
Joyce Canter	Lead Sp. Ed. Specialist	Kanawha County
Carol Tucker	Parent	Kanawha County
Tracy White	Parent	Kanawha County
Kristina Ellis	Parent	Kanawha County
Christina Yauch	Parent	Kanawha County
Samantha Perna	Parent Community Resource Center	Kanawha County
Sheila Harper	Parent Community Resource Center	Kanawha County
Marilyn W. Nichols	Parent Community Resource Center	Kanawha County
Rhonda McCormick	Legal Aid of WV FAST Program	Kanawha County
Vicky Brown	Preschool Specialist	Kanawha County
Keith Ann Smith	Lead Teacher Deaf & Hard of Hearing	Kanawha County
Joan M. Wilson	Teacher, Blind & Low Vision	Kanawha County
David King	Teacher, Work Exploration Program	Kanawha County
Mitchell Balaban	Teacher, Work Exploration Program	Kanawha County

IN CONCLUSION

The members of the West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children have the rare privilege of traveling the State of West Virginia and talking with educators, parents, and other stakeholders on a wide variety of issues. The dedication and commitment exhibited by the individuals who attended Council meetings this year was truly inspiring. At each of our stops, we heard about outstanding programs that are making a real difference in the lives and futures of students with exceptionalities throughout West Virginia.

In addition to hearing the good news about outstanding programs, we also took note of any unmet needs or problems which recur in more than one school district. It is our hope and expectation that the Council can help spread the word about exemplary programs and call attention to recurring problems so that the West Virginia Board of Education can address these concerns.

As this years' Chair, I would like to give special thanks to the Council's Executive Director, Susan White for her enlightened leadership, Pat Homberg, Executive Director of the WV Department of Education Office of Special Programs for continued technical and financial support to the Council, and to the many committed individuals who took the time to attend and participate in Council meetings this year.

Sincerely,

Jeff McCroskey
WVACEECC Chair 2013-14