

2014 - 2015

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

West Virginia

Advisory Council

for the

Education of

Exceptional Children



July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015

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, 2014-2015

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	Maysel, WV (Clay)	Community-at-Large Representative
Kathy Stonemark	Fayetteville, WV (Fayette)	Parent
Jeff McCroskey	Amma, WV (Roane)	Transition Specialist & Consultant
Teresa Clark	Charleston, WV (Kanawha)	Marshall University, IHE Representative
Kimberly Rodes	Hinton, WV (Summers)	Administrator, Special Education
Patricia Haberbosch	Clarksburg, WV (Harrison)	WV Parent Training Information
Vacancy		

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 Council 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, Annual Performance Report and State Systemic Improvement Plan as 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 2014-2015

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 not limited to:

PARENTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

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, Parent Educator Resource Centers, Academy Programs in Fairmont and Beckley Golf Academy: Paralympic Center. The WV Council of Administrators of Special Education (WV CASE) and the Office of Special Programs are commended for 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

The eight school systems visited this year, should be commended for their efforts to increase the level of student achievement and graduation rates for students. Noteworthy efforts include extensive professional learning 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. County administrators were highly complementary of the supportive role of the Office of Special Programs. Though compliance is essential for accountability, districts continue to 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 McDowell, Wayne and Wirt Counties for efforts to insure that students are prepared for life and work after they leave the school setting. Marion County is commended for an extensive interagency network to support students with emotional and social challenges. Ohio County is commended for excellence in student performance and graduation rates for students with disabilities. Wyoming and Mineral Counties are commended for home-school communication networks and dropout prevention. Putnam County is commended for the development of independent learning opportunities at Henderson House.

It is further noted that collaboration between districts and private/parochial schools, especially the Catholic Schools of the Dioceses of Wheeling Charleston, continue 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 targeted 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 Intervention (non-violent crisis management) annual training and recertification as required by State Board Policy 4373. Additionally, they promote effective co-teaching and inclusion practices to ensure students are taught by highly qualified teachers. Given the on-going changes in the national standards, the role of RESAs is expected to continue to expand as the demand for teacher support and training 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. The OSP has strengthened 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 insuring 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), Annual Performance Report (APR) and State Systemic Improvement Plan as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004).

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Council supports the West Virginia State 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 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 issues that impact academic achievement. The Office of Institutional Education Programs provides essential support to families, districts and youth who are in jeopardy of academic failure and incarceration for more serious crimes. The Council visited Academy Programs in Fairmont and can attest to the care and concern that the staff demonstrates for these children.

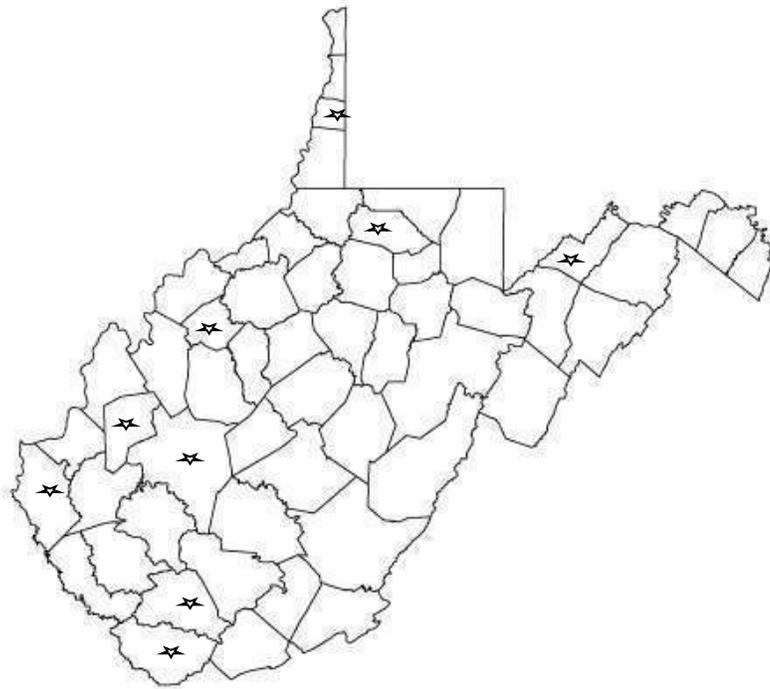
The Council is especially appreciative of the thoughtful response to the recommendations contained in this report each year.

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.

2014-15 Meeting Sites & Topics

McDowell / Wyoming County (RESA 1)	State Systemic Improvement Plan, Policy 2419
Wirt County (RESA 5)	Extended State Standards, School Visitations
Mineral County (RESA 8)	Due Process Report, Graduation 20/20
Wayne County (RESA 2)	Certification, Endorsements, Technology
Marion County (RESA 7)	Institutional Programs, Co-Teaching, Student Assistance Teams
Ohio County (RESA 6)	Student Achievement Initiatives, Graduation and Drop Out Prevention, Private School Visitation
Putnam County (RESA 3)	Local, Regional and State Reports
Kanawha County (Annual Meeting)	Annual Report, 2014-15 Agenda, Elections and Evaluations



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.

- 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. Frequently, general and special education teachers do not have clear understanding of their respective roles. Preparation and planning time limitations impede their effectiveness as teaching partners.
- 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. Individualized Education Programs must be written to meet student needs. School schedules must be developed to accommodate necessary individual instructional needs. Although the OSP cannot change the criteria for least restrictive placement categories, districts should not be penalized for placement decisions based on the intensity of students' instructional needs.
- During the course of the past three years, the Council has heard testimony from a variety of speakers regarding the critical need for expanded community-based effort to coordinate and integrate educational, developmental, family, health and other services. The growing trend of students coming to school exhibiting serious emotional and behavioral issues is of particular concern. This crisis must be addressed through collaboration with community partnerships that promote parental involvement, health care and expanded school mental health services. The task is complex and will require strong leadership to develop a continuum of services to ensure the community school initiative moves in the direction desirable to the community.
- The Council commends the Office of Special Programs and the WV Autism Training Center multi-phase initiative to implement School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (SW-PBIS) in twenty-one schools during the 2014-15 school year. As with previous efforts to implement research based PBIS models, it is essential that schools develop a strong Tier 1 to establish a positive school-wide climate and universal expectations for all students. Given specialized support and training, the schools in the pilot should be able to build capacity for replication in other schools within the districts. The Council supports this project and looks forward to expansion in additional districts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The content of this section of the report is based on testimony requested by Council or received during 8 public hearings within the past year. A listing of the 85 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. Based on the West Virginia Department of Education Strategic Priorities and Federal Indicators for students with disabilities, the Council makes the following Recommendations.

Graduation Project 20/20

Data analysis reveals only 70.27% of students with a disability in West Virginia graduated with a regular diploma. 84.46% of all students graduated from high school with a regular diploma. The graduation gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities is 14.18%. The WVBE has adopted goals from West Virginia's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request approved in May of 2013 to guide accountability for schools, county school districts and the state. Policy 2510: Assuring the Quality of Education: Regulations for Education Programs states by 2020, at least 85% of all students will graduate from high school within four years of enrolling in grade 9.

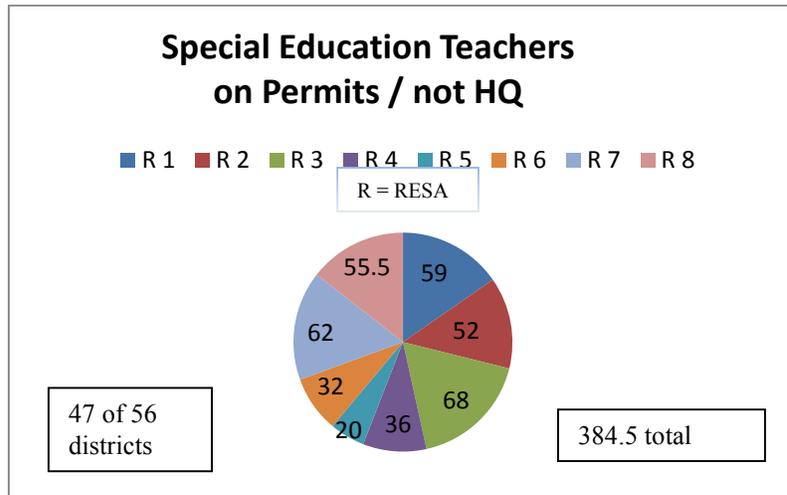
The Council recommends the West Virginia Department of Education implement evidence-based and promising practices (EBPPS) to ensure students with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, stay in school, progress in school and graduate and graduate with knowledge, skills and supports needed to succeed in post-secondary education and employment. Additionally, counties need to be provided the knowledge and implementation of strategies and supports needed for students to be college, career and community ready.

Highly Qualified Teachers

High quality instructional programs and strong instructional leadership are directly correlated to the achievement of students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Research supports the need for focus on early childhood education and early intervention to prepare young children for entry into academic learning and successful reading ability by age eight. Children must feel safe at school in order to want to be there every day. Teachers are faced with ever increasing demands to increase the rigor of instruction while being required to teach appropriate social and interpersonal skills to students. Although technology has eased the burden of writing standards based IEPs, paperwork and expanded demands to document Medicaid service are all consuming. Seven of the WVDE's priorities are linked to the need for highly qualified teachers. So what is to be done?

Retention and recruitment of highly qualified special education teachers is increasingly a problem for districts due to the large number of teachers who are moving from special education to general education positions due to the "paperwork" and regulatory requirements or moving to border states for higher salaries. 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. Please see the following chart reflecting the number of special education teachers who are on teaching permits because they either didn't have teacher education pre-service training or have moved from another field altogether. Often these temporary teachers lack understanding of the relationship between classroom management, behavior and learning. Long term assignments of non-degree teachers are not acceptable, especially for students with the most instructional needs.



The Council recommends that the West Virginia Department of Education and the Office of Special Programs continue to collaborate with institutions of higher education to develop common standards, expectations and accountability for pre-service teachers. Additionally, the Council recommends that WVDE and OSP expand professional learning opportunities in flexible ways, including technology, to insure that teachers are better prepared to understand and implement universal design and differentiated instruction to address the needs of all students who learn differently.

Parent and Community Relationships

Meaningful parent and community relationships are essential factors for addressing many of the problems that challenge society. National statistics on escalating substance abuse and health issues consistently rank West Virginians among the worst in the country. Communities lack access to adequate services. West Virginia was one of 120 states and local school districts to receive the *Now is the Time* Project AWARE grant for mental health first aid training. The grant is part of a major national initiative to support teachers, schools and communities in recognizing and responding to mental health concerns among youth in West Virginia. Project AWARE's purpose is to increase awareness of the mental health issues throughout the state by training school personnel and other adults who interact with school-aged youth on how to detect, respond and connect children and families who may have mental health issues with the appropriate services. The Council congratulates the WVDE and the OSP on recognizing and taking assertive action to address these problems. Parent involvement and participation in the educational process is necessary for developing relationships between schools, community providers and parents.

The Council recommends that the West Virginia Department of Education establish and standardize 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.

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.

Name	Position/ Representing	County	
Ingrid	Barker	Asst. Superintendent	McDowell
Nancy	Buckland	McDowell County Parent Educator Resource Center	McDowell
Rhonda	Stover	McDowell County Schools	McDowell
Nancy	Stover	Community	McDowell
Aaron	Lester	Director	McDowell
Nelson	Spencer	Superintendent	McDowell
Jewel	Hawks	McDowell County Schools	McDowell
Betsy	Peterson	OSP	McDowell
John	Daniels	Beckley Golf Academy	Wyoming
Stephen	Walls	Director	Wyoming
Christine	Snuffer	Wyoming County Special Ed	Wyoming
Ann	Reed	Wyoming County Special Ed	Wyoming
R. Greg	Bartlett	RESA 1	Wyoming
Mary Jane	Albin	Superintendent	Wirt
Angela	Domic Cox	Director	Wirt
Deb	Hartshorn	Wirt County High School Tiger Promotions	Wirt
Mary Beth	McCloy	Wirt County Parent Educator Resource Center	Wirt
Dianna	Bailey Miller	Legal Aid	Wirt
Brittney		Wirt County High School Tiger Promotions	Wirt
Kaitlyn		Wirt County High School Tiger Promotions	Wirt
Katie		Wirt County High School Tiger Promotions	Wirt
Kenny		Wirt County High School Tiger Promotions	Wirt
Kristina		Wirt County High School Tiger Promotions	Wirt
Miranda		Wirt County High School Tiger Promotions	Wirt
David E.	Simanski	Director	Mineral
Charles	Wimer	Keyser High School	Mineral
Joan	Hartman	Mineral County Schools	Mineral
Sue	Szafran	Keyser High School	Mineral
Jennifer	Hamilton	Keyser High School	Mineral
Kelly	Maruschac	Mineral County Schools	Mineral
Roberta	Unger	Fountain Primary School	Mineral
Jackie	Beverlin	Frankfort Intermediate School	Mineral
Allison	Beverlin	Frankfort High School	Mineral
Betsy	Peterson	OSP	Mineral
Ghaski	Browning	OSP	Mineral
Larry	Searcy	WV PT I	Mineral
Gloria	Shaffer	Legal Aid of WV	Mineral
Sarah	Ziegler	Parent	Mineral

Melissa	Lee	Parent	Mineral
Matthew	Youngblood	Parent	Mineral
Crystal	Youngblood	Parent	Mineral
John W.	Veronick	Parent	Mineral
Andrew	Root	Health Department	Mineral
Brian	Kelly	Parent	Mineral
Dawn	Hartung	Parent	Mineral
Natalie	Beasom	Parent	Mineral
Danielle	Kulp	Parent	Mineral
Anjenette	Courrier	Parent	Mineral
David E.	Whitlock	Parent	Mineral
Donna	Landin	WVDE eLearning Coordinator	Wayne
Kristi	James	RESA 2	Wayne
Kim	Adkins	Director	Wayne
Valerie	Wilson	OSP	Wayne
Melissa	Perry	WCBOE	Wayne
Kim	Legg	WCBOE	Wayne
Diana	Whitlock	WCBOE	Wayne
Sherry	Webb	WCBOE	Wayne
Patricia	Cline	Wayne County Schools	Wayne
Jessica	Willis	SVHS	Wayne
Samantha	Morris	WCBOE	Wayne
Beverly	Bailey	WCBOE	Wayne
William &	Totten	Parents	Wayne
Lori	Murray	Parent	Wayne
Rebecca	Richards	Kellogg Elementary	Wayne
Jeanette	Barker	Playmates Pre-Schools and Child Development	Wayne
Nathel	Lewis	Diversified Assessment & Therapy Services	Wayne
Camille	Tennet	Parent	Marion
Ardella	Cottrill	Grandparent	Marion
Randall	Farley	Director	Marion
Gary	Price	Superintendent	Marion
Gia	Deasy	Director	Marion
Lesa	Hines	RESA 7	Marion
Deana	Cummings	Legal Aid of WV - FAST Project	Marion
Leah	Stout	Director	Ohio
Sue E.	McQuier	Federal Programs Director	Ohio
Mary Beth	Criniti	St. Michael Parish School	Ohio
Lee P.	Gruber	St. Michael Parish School	Ohio
Joe	Paolo	RESA 6	Ohio
Dianna	Bailey Miller	Legal Aid	Ohio
Parker	Wolfe	WVSU	Putnam
Meegan	King	WVSU	Putnam
Carol	Cook	Community	Putnam
Dawn	Embry King	RESA 3	Putnam
Annette	Pratt	Director	Putnam
Betsy	Peterson	OSP	Putnam

CONCLUSION

On behalf of the West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of the Exceptional Children, our members and those whom we serve, I would like to thank all of the dedicated administrators, teachers, caregivers, parents and advocates across the State of West Virginia who continue to work so diligently to improve the lives of children with exceptionalities in this state. As the Council travels to each RESA of the state, it is inspiring to see the daunting efforts families, school districts, contract providers and those within the West Virginia Department of Education who are invested in assisting all students to reach their potential.

The West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children is proud to be a part of the ongoing process of improving education for our students. West Virginia has fostered a cooperative effort to ensure a brighter future for students with exceptionalities. Certainly, there are areas of needed growth for exceptional students that must be pursued throughout the State. The WVACEEC is proud to have a role in indentifying these needs and working to share in the answers to combat said needs.

As this year's chair of the Council, I would like to specifically recognize a few people for the tireless work they do on behalf of the students in the State. I would first like to acknowledge Susan White, the Executive Director of our Council, for her strong leadership of our Council. I would also like to thank Pat Homberg, Executive Director of the West Virginia Department of Education Office of Special Programs and her staff for their efforts. Many initiatives have been launched by the Office of Special Programs to ensure a brighter future for West Virginia students and they are to be commended. Finally, I would like to thank all of those who have attended our meetings throughout the State and provided their sincere and honest testimony which allows our Council to better make recommendations to the West Virginia State Board of Education.

Warmest Regards,



Dr. Vincent de Paul Schmidt, Ed.D.
Chairperson - WVACEEC