

MINUTES
Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)
Office of Special Education
Advisory Panel
October 28, 2015
9:30 a.m.
Embassy Suites
Ridgeland, MS

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Members Present

Roger Bullock, Antwan Clark, Nan Christian, Donny Frazier, Johnny McGinn, Pam Dollar, Anthony Goins, Carolyn Crawford, Doris Flettrich, Shelia Brown, McKimley Hudson, Shelley Franklin

Members Absent

Nicole Boyd, Stacy Callender, Janice Dukes, Deborah Giles, Barbara Greene, Vicki Hartley, Laurie Heiden, Sandra McClendon, Hope Pearson, Deborah Pittman, Krystal Sirota, Denise Soares, Melanie Stevens, Jacqueline Washington, Gwendolyn Williams

Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Staff Present

Gretchen Cagle, Armerita Tell, Yvonne Ellis and Candice Taylor

New Member Orientation

Dr. Armerita Tell talked about and reviewed a PowerPoint regarding procedures for the Special Education Advisory Panel for new members.

Call to Order

The meeting of the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by vice-chair, Nan Christian.

Roll Call

Roll call was conducted by Ms. Christian and a quorum was not present. Therefore, no business was conducted.

Report of Attendance

- October 28, 2015 – 12 present, 15 absent

Agenda Items

- Nan Christian shared an email she received from Chairperson Janice Dukes since she was not able to attend. Ms. Dukes recommended doing a needs assessment to assist with the formation of this year's committees.

Public Comments (10:15 a.m.)

- Ms. Joyce Parker from Greenville commented on concerns about MOD and the SATP exams and their effect on graduation.

Review of Last Year's Topics

- Nan Christian reviewed topics from last year for benefit of new members. MDE website is being updated.
- The topic of Restraint and Seclusion has been addressed in the Office of Safe and Orderly Schools. Gretchen Cagle reviewed the SEAP by-laws as relates to the work on the policy for Restraint and Seclusion.
- Ms. Christian reviewed the topic of MDE addressing playground access for students with disabilities. MDE will look at ADA regulations to do a checklist and provide guidance and training to districts. The Panel will help develop the checklist.
- Ms. Cagle reviewed the function of SEAP in the by-laws. Next meeting MDE will bring the Annual Performance Report to share. She suggested getting input from new members regarding issues for the committees to work on that MDE is not currently addressing.
- Ms. Christian recommended getting update from Ms. Cagle now to see where we are and get ideas on how to proceed.

Report from State Director

1. Ms. Cagle indicated that the Office of Special Education is still housed at the Life Share House on the campus of the Mississippi School for the Blind. There has been an increase in staff, and consequently there have been over 100 trainings in the last 2 months, conducted by about 9 staff members. Staff has also been in a district that is newly under conservatorship. Instead of conducted "sit and get" trainings, MDE staff has conducted small group, sit-down meetings with teachers to look at their IEPs and receive the support they need to do their work.
2. New Special Education Director Institute is being implemented this year. The last meeting focused on December 1 count, personnel report, and project applications.
3. Ms. Cagle gave updates on the Special Education Task Force and where we are with their recommendations. The subject of graduation options was taken to Dr. Wright, which brought about a larger discussion of graduation, including general education options. A steering committee was formed to look at all options for everyone. Changes will be phased in. Recommendations will go to the commission in February.
4. Transition services will also addressed. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is requiring Vocational-Rehabilitation Services to get involved earlier, beginning at age 14. Information regarding this will be presented to special education directors at their next meeting in January.
5. The Office of Special Education is partnering with the Office of Federal Programs regarding funding. A joint Fiscal Conference was held on October 27 and 28 to work on strengthening partnerships to get the most for our money.

6. Mississippi Comprehensive Automated Performance-based System got approval to pilot in 2016-17 for project applications. They are reviewing requirements to simplify the application.
7. Ms. Cagle met with Mississippi Speech Language Hearing Association to develop deeper relationships. We are working on a way to use language/speech pathologists to help intervene with skills such as phonemic awareness. Only 48% of students receiving language/speech services scored proficient on the Mississippi Curriculum Test.
8. Braille Bill Advisory Committee met to discuss the Braille Authority of North America's approved changes to the Braille code. Teachers of the Visually Impaired met to discuss their current work and what they recommend for Mississippi's transition plan. Their recommendations were taken back to the Braille Bill Advisory Committee and they made changes to the plan. Plan will be taken to State Board in December and then be brought to the Advisory Panel. State tests will be in the old code this year.
9. A committee has been formed to address the Testing Accommodations Manual. Teachers in each subject area from various parts of the State are reviewing current manual to determine what is missing and what can be deleted. This committee will be working jointly with the Office of Special Education. The Manual will be ready in March and will be used for the 2016-17 school year.
10. State Systemic Improvement Plan is coming along, with literacy as the focus area. The measureable result is at the third grade, but the plan will cover grades K-12. General education teachers need to be trained on co-teaching. Administrators need training on evaluating special education teachers. Office of Special Education can provide training for all teachers on universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and how to help struggling learners versus just training special education teachers. Districts will be doing a needs assessment. Lisa White will be helping with this process.
11. Ms. Cagle will be presenting at Regional Principals Meetings to let administrators know what supports the Office of Special Education have available for them.
12. Ms. Cagle attended the National Association of State Directors of Special Education conference in Baltimore. It was a good opportunity for networking. Data management systems are being explored through the Office of Technology and Strategic Services for special education data. State-wide Individualized Education Program systems are also being explored for indicators to be monitored. A Request for Information will be done, then a Request for Proposals.
13. A press conference was held to discuss National Assessment of Educational Progress results compared to 2013. Mississippi was the only state with a significant increase in fourth grade math (4%) and English/Language Arts (5%). Mississippi defied the national trend for eighth grade by remaining level and not decreasing. There were increases in subgroups including students with disabilities.
14. Ms. Cagle gave information regarding the Autism Demonstration School on the coast. Teachers can go there to see how to structure a classroom. There was an institute this summer so teachers could observe and participate in a make-and-take. Sharon Coon is the Autism Specialist in the Office of Special Education. Dr. Julie Lowery is the Emotional Disability Specialist. Both of them are working with districts on behavior issues. Shelia Brown mentioned that parents in her district have been requesting Applied Behavior Analysis therapy, but it is difficult to find

a therapist in that area. Ms. Cagle mentioned that the University of Southern Mississippi has just started an ABA certification program. Ole Miss has an EmD add-on program.

- Ms. Christian recommended that Panel members be thinking about topics based on what Ms. Cagle has said.
- Yvonne Ellis gave instructions on how to complete travel reimbursement forms.

Luncheon

- Outgoing member, LaTrina Baker Smith, was recognized for her service on the Panel.

Agenda Items

- Ms. Christian reminded members of the importance of attendance at meetings and responding promptly to emails.
- Ms. Christian suggested gathering information from a variety of stakeholders regarding issues to consider for committees through the use of a survey.
- Ms. Cagle suggested the Panel focus on needs related to student outcomes.
- Ms. Brown recommended making sure the Panel reaches the right stakeholders – principals, general education staff included.
- Ms. Flettrich suggested we highlight districts who are doing well to give a positive focus on them.
- Ms. Cagle asked for the purpose of the survey. The Panel is to identify unmet needs of students with disabilities.

Public Comments (1:00 p.m.)

- Ms. Aresia Rhodes, parent of a child with Autism, made comments on Inclusion. She stated that general education teachers are not aware of needs. She recommended including questions on the survey that are specific to the stakeholder's position.

Agenda Items

- Ms. Christian said each person needs to think more about what we need. She will have Janice send an email regarding specific questions to include in the survey.
- Ms. Cagle suggested we look at the information we may already have. Lisa White and Edryce Thompson can look at State plan information. PTI can check parent information.
- Ms. Christian asked that members send information they have to Janice or herself via email. Districts will be interested in seeing the data that is collected. All departments at MDE are busy working on items that are results-driven.

- Ms. Pam Dollar mentioned the letter that the U.S. Department of Education sent out regarding dyslexia.
- Ms. Christian asked who at MDE oversees dyslexia. Ms. Cagle said that it is Robin Lemonis. She can come speak to the Panel on this topic. Others can come speak as well on topics that are needed by Panel members.
- Mr. Frazier asked if all districts can be required to use one dyslexia screener to provide consistency. Ms. Cagle said that MDE will not mandate a screener because under the law, districts get to choose their own.
- Ms. Christian mentioned that at the last Panel meeting, updates were given regarding transportation. Additional training information was added.
- Ms. Flettrich commented that a directive was sent to their district.
- Ms. Brown expressed a concern over behavior on school buses. Training needs to be conducted regarding behavior and special transportation.
- Dr. Tell mentioned that she is working with Vocational-Rehabilitation Services on an interagency agreement. She will be working with Donny Frazier and Lavonda Hart and will begin in January.

Adjournment

- Meeting was adjourned at 2:14 pm.