

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 15

QUESTION:

What was the involvement of special education advisory groups regarding the decision to close the learning centers?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: NA

ANSWER:

For the past three years, staff has shared information with the Special Education Staffing Plan Committee about the disproportionate representation of minority students in special education, the mandate from the Maryland State Department of Education to include more students with disabilities in settings with typical peers, and the achievement results of secondary students with disabilities.

The specific plan to realign special education services by phasing out the learning centers was discussed only with key stakeholders in the parent/advocate community in December 2006. In addition, this plan was reviewed with the Office of School Performance, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs, Office of Organizational Development, and the union presidents during the FY 2008 budget process. The attached communication and implementation plan for the proposed realignment includes efforts to provide outreach to parents in an effort to build consensus for this important step towards providing equal access to rigorous instruction for all secondary students with disabilities.

However, the superintendent of schools has announced a revised special education proposal that would allow all special education students in grades 6 through 12 who are currently in secondary learning centers to remain there through graduation. The revised proposal phases out learning centers over a six-year period, but continues the effort to include more special education students in general education classes. The superintendent will present a budget amendment to the Board of Education to implement this revision.