

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION AD HOC COMMITTEE**

January 18, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. with the following Board members and support staff present: Shirley Brandman (chair), Sharon Cox, Roland Ikheloa, and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Staff present: Gwen Mason, Judy Pattik, Holli Swann, and Cathy Pevey.

MINUTES

The minutes from November 16, 2007, were approved, as amended.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUSPENSION DATA

This item was delayed until the next meeting. Ms. Pattik will coordinate the discussion.

Action: Schedule item for February.

UPDATE ON UNIVERSAL DESIGN (UDL) FOR LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

Staff reported that the system has formed a cross-office online curriculum project team, including Dr. DeCoste of the HIAT team. This team is lead by three principals that are on special assignment. The Office of Special Education and Student Services (OSESS) will be consulted during development to ascertain user requirements and specifications for the online curriculum.

As staff considers a platform for developing and disseminating curriculum, assessments, instructional resources, and online professional development, the project team is investigating methods for universal design. The Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs (OCIP) and the Office of Organization Development (OOD) are working on an exemplary teacher project to identify teachers who model and can articulate knowledge and skill in pedagogy, content, and curriculum that are recommended generally and for specific disciplines and age groups, and OSESS will be consulted.

OCIP and OSESS are consulting with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to identify software and technology that can be used to promote UDL in MCPS curriculum, instruction, and assessments. Dr. DeCoste has worked with teachers to develop materials to make Grade 6 materials in social studies and reading/English language arts more universal. Dr. DeCoste has asked OCIP to review the materials in time for teachers in three middle schools to pilot them in third marking period. OCIP now has the capacity to conduct this review.

Staff is participating in professional development at a national conference to investigate resources and practices that support UDL and digital development and dissemination of curriculum, instructional resources, assessment, and online professional development.

OCIP staff is researching and benchmarking with other districts to identify effective practices for making instruction more student centered, interactive, engaging, and universal. OCIP staff is working on ordering textbooks that are available digitally, consistent with new federal law, and investigating implications/applications of E-books (download texts and novels, highlight, bookmark, audio, and other universal components).

The committee asked what would be different in a school that piloted UDL. Staff responded that there would be material available that was digital where items could be highlighted in color, Promethean boards, and the ability to manipulate the items with changing the content to make curriculum more accessible.

A committee member asked if OOD has embedded UDL in training teachers in order to modify instructional materials. Staff explained that the conversation has started with 6th grade teachers' mandatory professional development.

The committee pointed out that UDL requires a culture change in the school system since it will become a part of all instruction. There should be a mechanism to gather and replicate best practices in UDL. Furthermore, the Special Education Continuous Improvement Team (SECIT) recommended a focus on UDL for this year.

Action: Invite Dr. DeCoste to the April meeting to review 6th grade UDL pilots.

DISCUSSION OF THE DECEMBER 14, 2007, UPDATE ON SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER TRANSITION PROJECT

Staff reported that there is a meeting every two weeks with case managers to get case-by-case updates. The questions focus on inclusion success, including items such as bullying. Each content area is explored and the possible need for more support for the student.

The committee was interested in the challenges that have been encountered now that the 30-day reviews have been completed. What has staff learned from different situations? Are there broad implications for the school system? Staff replied that math is a challenge for special education students. The pace and rigor of the curriculum needs to be modified, identify strategies for math vocabulary, and the need for staff development with interventions and added strategies.

The committee discussed the implications of getting students closer to content teachers, but with the challenges in math is there a need to design new interventions? Are there implications for staffing and class size to find ways to make the students successful? Staff responded that the middle school students need adjustments in the curriculum with strategies based on the expectations of the students. Special education students have the need to learn the essential components or key elements. Therefore, interventions, such as UDL and modified assessment, would provide grade level content with less depth and breath of the curriculum.

It was suggested by the committee that staff followup with a paragraph on how the recommended strategies to improve academic performance and behavior have been accomplished in future updates..

The committee asked if the evaluation of the first year of transition would collect information on social adjustment. Staff replied that the IEP teams set goals for social adjustment. One member observed that this is an issue outside of special education. Counselors have the responsibility to made sure that all are students are supported in their new schools. This issue will be raised with the Department of Shared Accountability which is conducting the formal evaluation.

Action: Staff will prepare a memorandum with an update on the evaluation of inclusion to date, counselors, and overall strategies.

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF SERVICES TO STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

The committee asked for a snapshot on offerings at all school levels for children on the autism spectrum. Staff replied that MCPS serves 1,059 students in the county. The students are served using a variety of classes and services. Ms. Secan is responsible for the overall services for autistic children. Services for students and future enrollment are projected by all special education cluster supervisors who are in touch with the schools, preschools and other programs. Through birth rate projections and child find, enrollment can be estimated in order to have programs and services in place. The annual review process is used to propose programs. The trend data is that autism is that the number of students with autism is increasing. Staff will provide the Committee with data used to track autism students and their placements.

There was a short discussion about transition services, and it was decided to invite Dr. Kathy Kolan to a future meeting.

Action: Schedule Transition Services on a future agenda and invite Dr. Kolan. Follow up on data regarding students on the autism spectrum.

REVIEW OF COMMITTEE CHARGE AND SCOPE OF WORK

This item was delayed until Mr. Abrams is available.

Action: Schedule as soon as possible.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS AND FOLLOWUPS

1. In February, schedule the Special Education Suspension Data based on the September 19, 2007, memorandum
2. In April, schedule Dr. DeCoste to review the 6th grade UDL pilots.
3. In the future, schedule Dr. Kolan regarding Transition Services
4. In the future, schedule review of the committee's charge and scope of work
5. Follow up on autism data

WORK PLAN

3. Followup on ASHA Workload Recommendations
2. Review of Disproportionality Report

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.