



Georgia
State Advisory Panel
For
Special Education

Annual Report

2012-2013

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Introduction:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that each State establish and maintain an advisory panel for the purpose of advising the State special education staff regarding the education of eligible children with disabilities.

This panel, known as the State Advisory Panel (SAP) for Special Education, is comprised of parents, persons with disabilities, educators and administrators as well as representative from public and private agencies.

The SAP advises the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) Division for Special Education Services and Supports on the unmet needs related to the education of children with disabilities within the State and provides feedback on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding special education. The SAP is a critical partner in the development of Georgia's State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR). The Panel also advises the Division on the improvement activities that need to be developed and implemented in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Each year, members review data on the improvement activities included in the SPP and APR and make suggestions for updates to the activities and targets.

SAP Membership:

This year, the SAP consisted of a total of 55% of the members being parents of students with disabilities and/or individuals with disabilities. The membership included 16 parents of students with disabilities, two individuals with a disability, representatives from the state protection and advocacy agency, the parent training and information center, PART-C, local school administrators, representatives from Title I, and higher education and private schools. In addition, relevant state agencies, including individuals from the Departments of Education, Juvenile Justice, Georgia PTA, Labor (Vocational Rehabilitation), Corrections, Family and Children Services, were represented. The Georgia Council for Administrators of Special Education (GCASE) and the Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) were also represented. Members

represented a diversity of knowledge, background and opinions and brought their own real life personal and/or professional experiences to their work on the SAP.

SAP Overview:

The SAP met four times during this year, in Helen, Pine Mountain, Macon, and Kennesaw, Georgia. During the year, presentations were made to the committee by members of the GaDOE staff as well as other individuals, agencies, and organizations.

Topics included:

- An overview of the state's General Supervision process, Collaborative Communities process and Active Engagement process
- An update on the Georgia Flexibility Waiver and the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) recommendations
- Updates from the GaDOE, Division for Special Education Services and Supports
- A presentation on the State Performance Plan and Annual Progress Report
- Manifestation Determination and how it is used to protect against discrimination toward students with disabilities
- A review of the Georgia College 411 website and what it offers
- A visit to the Georgia Academy for the Blind including a tour of the facilities and an overview given by staff of their history, the students they serve and their curriculum
- The use of accommodations and how they can be used to support students with disabilities
- Universal Design for Learning and how it can be used to support students with disabilities
- A tour of the Georgia Instructional Materials Center and the Prison Braille program, as well as the Smokey Powell Assistive Technology Center
- An update on the Seclusion and Restraint rule and how it is working throughout the state
- A presentation on Georgia's Teacher Evaluation program

- An update on the upcoming Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) Assessments and how they will affect students with disabilities.
- Kennesaw State University's Office of Disabled Student Support Service
- Kennesaw State University's Teacher Preparation program for special education teachers
- A discussion with students having significant disabilities who are attending Kennesaw State University's Academy for Inclusive Learning and Social Growth

Public Comment:

Public comments were heard at two of the four meetings, allowing panel members the opportunity to hear from constituents around the state. During the 2012-2013 year, public comments related to:

- Concerns over Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) as behavior management strategies
- Concerns about transition of students with disabilities out of school and improving their working knowledge of the system so they are able to better navigate on their own
- The need for students to be taught self-advocacy in high school so they are able to use these skills at the college level

Committees:

Five standing committees met regularly in conjunction with each quarterly meeting of the full panel. A brief description of each committee follows as well as a summary of the information discussed by each committee for this year:

- **Dispute Resolution** – The Dispute Resolution Committee reviews data and decisions related to due process proceedings and other forms of dispute resolution. Upon review of data at each quarterly meeting, committee members make recommendations as well as requests for follow-up to the Division related to their findings.

- The committee reported FY 12 data. Ninety-five complaints were filed with the trend of increased complaints continuing. Thirty-five of the complaints resulted in non-compliant findings. There were 79 requests for mediation, with 66 mediations held.
 - The committee discussed the Facilitated IEP project and solicited input from the panel, as well as from parents around the state.
 - The committee reviewed results from due process hearings conducted in Cobb, Henry, Bryan and Gwinnett counties.
- **Family Engagement** – The Family Engagement Committee assists in the review of fact sheets for families on initial and annual evaluations, transition from Babies Can't Wait into school, transition out of high school, IEPs, and discipline. The committee also reviews data and information related to parent participation in individualized education program (IEP) meetings and parent response rates on the parent survey. The parent survey is disseminated each year in order to assess the percentage of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. This committee makes recommendations for strategies and materials to support increased family engagement.
 - The committee continued to look at the districts that participate in the parent surveys and has concerns regarding the low return rate. They recommended submitting a list of best practice ideas and recommendations that could be submitted to and used by school districts.
 - The committee constructed an acronym list that includes definitions and recommended that Parent to Parent (P2P) and the GaDOE publish the list.
 - **Membership** – The Membership Committee assists in the recruitment of new members each year. Committee members review all applications received from

potential new members and make recommendations to the Division and the State Board of Education for new appointments.

- The committee thanked panel members for their help in increasing the number of applications received, as well as the diversity those applications embodied with regard to:
 - i. The types of disabilities represented by the applicants;
 - ii. The widespread representation of districts across the state by the applicants.
- Two panel members renewed for a second term.
- **Public Comment** - The Public Comment Committee receives and tracks all public comments submitted to the SAP for review, including those received in writing and in person. Committee members make recommendations for any necessary follow-up and/or response following receipt of each comment.
 - The committee focused on ways to try and increase the number of public comments made to the SAP. Suggestions included changing the time on the agenda for public comment to earlier in the day, contacting professional groups to get the word out regarding public comment, having targeted topics to solicit input and creating a sample comment to assist people in understanding the process.
 - After panel discussion, the decision was made to move public comment up on the agenda to the beginning of day one – typically around 1:30 p.m.
 - The committee made the suggestion to move public comment to the evening to see if it would increase the ability of parents and individuals to participate.
- **Operating Procedures** - The Policies and Procedures Committee reviews and makes recommendations related to the policies, procedures and by-laws that guide the operations of the SAP.
 - The committee continued to review the procedures for any changes that might need to be made.

- The committee discussed the issue of how to get more individuals with disabilities involved in the panel and the problems associated with that.

Panel Recommendations:

- Schedule and hold State Advisory Panel meetings consistently in one central location to make it as convenient as possible for constituents across the state to attend and/or make public comment in person. The panel suggested that Macon be considered for all four panel meetings to be conducted during the 2013-14 year. The panel also suggested that the meeting reconvene after dinner on the first day so that public comment could be held in the evening.
- Continue to look for ways to increase public comment at the meetings. Reaching out to other organizations, such as Parent 2 Parent, different disability organizations, state agencies and parent teacher organizations could facilitate increased knowledge of the ability and process to make public comment to the SAP.
- Focus on ensuring that students with disabilities have the knowledge and skills (beyond the standard curriculum) to be successful in the post-secondary environment they choose. This should include the ability to advocate for themselves for the services and help they need, as well as a working knowledge of how to navigate their chosen system (college, work, vocational schools, etc.).
- Work to improve the number and quality of post-secondary options available to students with disabilities. Programs like Kennesaw State University's Academy for Inclusive Learning and Social Growth should be replicated and expanded upon to other locations across the state.
- Implement best-practice activities across the districts to try and increase the number of parent surveys being returned.
- Efforts should continue to review and track violations to the Restraint and Seclusion Rule across Georgia.
- The panel applauds the Facilitated IEP project and supports the implementation of it and other programs that enable parents to have other options to resolve issues they may have with the districts.

- Encourage all special education staff to fully participate in the rollout of the Common Core and Georgia Performance Standards.