

**State Special Education Advisory Committee
(SSEAC)**

**Holiday Inn Select Koger Center
Richmond, Virginia
October 15-16, 2009**

Thursday, October 15, 2009

SSEAC Members					
	Present	Absent		Present	Absent
Eva Aikens		x	Mona Holmes	x	
Judy Averill		x	Lori Jackson	x	
Mike Behrmann	x		Bernadette Jones	x	
Suzanne Bowers		x	Jackie Myal	x	
Bob Chappell	x		Jacqueline Nelson	x	
Mary Ann Discenza		x	Jennifer O'Berry-Ham		x
Christina Draper		x	Peter Squire	x	
Fran Goforth	x		Tamara Temoney		x
Melodie Henderson	x		Carletta Wilson		x
Sandra Hermann	x				

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Staff							
Pat Abrams	x	Suzanne Creasey	x	Gloria Dalton	x	Sharon Siler	x
Cathy Pomfrey	x	Anu Upadhyaya	x	JoAnne Carver	x	Jeff Phenicie	x

Guests					
Beth Haw	x	Hattie Garrow (The Virginian Pilot)		Angela Dews (RIC Ed. Association)	x

Call to Order

Dr. Mike Behrmann, Chair, called the meeting to order. Members introduced themselves and new members identified subcommittees of interest to them for appointment.

Business Session

Dr. Behrman determined and announced that a quorum of members was present.

Minutes

The minutes of the July 2009 meeting were approved as written.

Subcommittee Assignments

Ms. Lori Jackson – SOP Annual Plan Review and Response to Intervention (RTI)
Ms. Sandra Hermann – Policy & Regulation and Constituency Involvement
Ms. Bernadette Jones – Policy and Regulation and Response to Intervention (RTI)
Ms. Jackie Myal – Nominating and Personnel

Operational Procedures and By-Laws

Dr. Pat Abrams distributed a draft of the SSEAC By-Laws and reviewed changes made based on discussion at the July 2009 meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Mona Holmes and seconded by Ms. Bernadette Jones to approve the changes to the bylaws. The motion was approved.

Draft copies of the Operational Procedures were distributed, and Dr. Abrams reviewed the changes that had been made based on earlier discussion. A motion was made and approved to also change the information for the TTY numbers and replace with information on the Virginia Relay. A second motion was made and approved to accept all changes as indicated.

Annual Report

A draft version of the 2008-2009 Annual Report to the Board of Education was distributed. Dr. Mike Behrmann asked members to review the document and to provide input. He reminded members that a motion had been approved at the July 2009 meeting giving him the authority to complete the report on behalf of the SSEAC. Discussion included comments about format and recommendations.

Presentations

State Assessment Update: Use of Alternatives and Audit Findings

Dr. Sharon Siler, Team Lead, Alternative Assessment

Dr. Sharon Siler provided information on the 2008-2009 administration of the Virginia's alternate/alternative assessments for students with disabilities which include: the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP), the Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA), and the Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP). The presentation included an overview of each program in addition to a review of participation and performance based on audit/scoring findings.

Standards of Learning Instructional Resources

Mr. Jeff Phenicie, Specialist, Special Education Instruction Services

Mr. Phenicie provided an overview of Virginia's Accountability System for students with disabilities with particular emphasis on alternate and alternative assessments, including the VGLA, VSEP and VAAP. The overview included terminology associated with state assessment, participation criteria for each assessment and a sample of the types of evidence that may be submitted in a collection of evidence.

Break

State Performance Plan-Annual Performance Report Data Update

Mr. Anu Upadhyaya, Specialist, Financial and Data Services

Mr. Upadhyaya, VDOE data analyst, provided special education trend data. This included:

- a comparison of Fall Membership state totals from 2004 through 2008 to highlight the increase of students in general education.
- a comparison between the number of special education students from the December 1 Child Count from the 2004 through 2008 to show a decrease in the state total number of special education students.
- detailed graphs with trend data at the state level that included averages and ranges for each disability to highlight increase or decrease in the percentage of special education students.
- state level data by regional percentages to highlight variations and patterns.

Members of the committee discussed the overall patterns and possible causes to trends reflected in the data. Members were provided with a data analysis summary sheet of the trend data.

Public Comment

Ms. Beth Haw from Williamsburg had questions and concerns about the growing numbers of students who have IEPs and who are being disciplined for behaviors associated with their disability. Her questions included:

(1) a request for recommendations for resources or teaching support to address this situation in

schools that are being sited?

(2) Has the SSEAC considered an evaluation of this topic?

(3) Has the SSEAC received a report on this topic?

(4) How are schools being held accountable for these elevated numbers?

(5) What does it mean for a school if they are sited?

(6) Are school systems reporting to VDOE on their process for improving how teachers, school staff and administration are addressing suspensions and expulsions associated with students with learning differences?

Lunch

Subcommittees

The three Ad Hoc Subcommittees met. The DOE provided staff support for each committee, Personnel – Dr. JoAnne Carver; Response to Intervention – Dr. Pat Abrams; and Constituency Involvement – Ms. Gloria Dalton.

Break

Ad Hoc Subcommittee Reports

Personnel

Dr. JoAnne Carver, Director of Teacher Education, reported that the vacancy in Teacher Education has not been advertised. In the interim, Dr. Carver will be the contact for the SSEAC. She can be reached at 804-371-2475. She reported the following to the subcommittee:

- ABTEL's recommendations are going before the Board of Education this month.
- All 60 of the teacher licensure programs in special education have been approved.
- Tuition assistance for speech and language pathologists, early childhood special education teachers, for para-educators, and for teachers not yet endorsed is available. Applications are coming in and the funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- The Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan (VTSL) provides funding to colleges and universities to assist with tuition based on critical shortage areas. This is available through university nomination and is available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- The list of the top ten critical shortage teaching endorsement areas has been developed for 2009-1010 and includes a number of special education areas.

Response to Intervention (RtI)

Dr. Peter Squire reported that new members were updated regarding the RtI process and definition. In addition, the group discussed the updates that were provided at the July 2009 meeting. Members were informed about additional materials posted to Response to Intervention (RtI) website:

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/studentsrvcs/RTI/>. The committee requested that the Virginia Department of Education provide additional information to the entire SSEAC committee regarding the process and data collected with the pilot RtI sites. Examples of specific questions of interest are:

- How long does an intervention occur before a special education refer takes place?
- If teachers are always performing assessments, when do they have time to teach?

Constituency

Ms. Gloria Dalton reported that the Constituency subcommittee discussed the challenges of communication between regional parent representatives on the SSEAC and the chairs of local special education advisory committee in their regions to determine if there are concerns or issues that need to be brought to the state special education advisory committee. Since e-mail would be the most efficient and cost effective way to communicate with local SEAC chairpersons, it was suggested that the Department secure both telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for all local SEAC chairpersons to distribute to each regional parent representative. Contact information for the local SEAC chairpersons will be provided by Gloria Dalton to each parent regional representative.

The subcommittee recommends that all SSEAC Representatives utilize the flyer announcing the quarterly meetings and take advantage of their networking list to communicate with their constituency groups.

Friday, October 16, 2009

SSEAC Members					
	Present	Absent		Present	Absent
Eva Aikens		x	Mona Holmes	x	
Judy Averill	x		Lori Jackson	x	
Mike Behrmann	x		Bernadette Jones	x	
Suzanne Bowers		x	Jackie Myal	x	
Bob Chappell		x	Jacqueline Nelson	x	
Mary Ann Discenza		x	Jennifer O'Berry-Ham		x
Christina Draper		x	Peter Squire		x
Fran Goforth	x		Tamara Temoney		x
Melodie Henderson	x		Carletta Wilson	x	
Sandra Hermann	x				

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Staff							
Pat Abrams	x	Suzanne Creasey	x	Gloria Dalton	x		
Cathy Pomfrey	x						

Guests							
Beth Haw	x	Kathy Maybee (PEATC)	x				

Call to Order

Dr. Mike Behrmann called the meeting to order and introduced Dr. Judy Douglas, Director, and Ms. Melissa Smith, Coordinator of Administrative Services, from the Office of Dispute Resolution and Administrative Services.

Revised State Special Education Regulations Training

Dr. Judy Douglas and Ms. Melissa Smith presented major changes from the Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, July 7, 2009. These regulations are the culmination of a three-year process that involved: two meetings of 20 stakeholders; 9 public hearings; 3 public comment periods; and 42,300 public comments. SSEAC members received a packet of information that included:

- VDOE’s guidance document on the implementation of the regulations,
- A copy of the PowerPoint presentation, and
- various VDOE technical assistance and guidance documents to assist in understanding the new

requirements.

When Dr. Douglas reviewed with SSEAC members the section of the requirements related to VDOE's responsibilities under the special education regulations, Dr. Douglas reminded SSEAC members of ODRAS' September 3, 2009 mailing to them of ODRAS' cover memo and Annual Report, with reference to the posted due process hearing decisions and the Web site link to the decisions. Dr. Douglas reminded SSEAC members that the federal and state special education regulations require VDOE to provide SSEAC members these redacted decisions. Dr. Douglas further noted that with future quarterly postings of the decisions, she will send SSEAC members an e-mail advising them of the current postings and available Web site link.

Reports begun on Thursday and finished on Friday

Constituency Reports	
Name	Report
Eva Aikens	Absent
Judy Averill	<p>Across the state LEA's are implementing or are in the beginning stages of developing Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH is a school to work transition program for students with disabilities in which the schools partner with DRS, an employment service organization and business to provide a full immersion employment program for students in their last year of school. Currently Chesterfield County, Richmond City, Hampton/Newport News and Henrico County are implementing SEARCH while many other LEA's are in the beginning/planning stages of developing this program.</p>
Mike Behrmann	None
Suzanne Bowers	<p>Absent – read by Cathy Pomfrey</p> <p>Fairfax County Sheree Brown Kaplan and the Fairfax County PTA are hosting an informational workshop on the Virginia Special Education regulations on December 5th. VDOE will be the presenters.</p> <p>There have been a lot of complaints from parents about the increasing reliance on the VGLA. Some believe the VGLA is not a true grade level assessment and perpetuates low expectations for students with disabilities. These parents believe they are being pressured to take the VGLA simply to obtain better test scores for the school, not to ensure their children's needs are met. Some of these complaints are reflected in the editorial published below: http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/columns/Fairfax-public-schools-officials-cheat-on-test-scores-8274810-60043947.html</p> <p>Loudoun County The Loudoun County SEAC reports that they have been working on the website content, inclusion, identification/eligibility, building our base membership, and we just started a subcommittee on Alternative Reading programs.</p>

Constituency Reports	
Name	Report
Bob Chappell	Absent
Mary Ann Discenza	Absent
Christina Draper	Absent
Fran Goforth	The local directors of special education are busy updating their policies and procedures related to new special education regulations that became effective in July 2009. Additionally, intensive training is taking place in the LEAs regarding the new regulations. Targeted groups have been School Board members, administrators, teachers, related service personnel and parents
Melodie Henderson	The VEA (Virginia Education Association) is in the process of developing a Special Education "IDEA Cadre". This cadre's purpose will be to provide training in a variety of areas of need in Special Education. They will be made available to school divisions upon request. More information is forthcoming.
Sandra Hermann	oral
Mona Holmes	oral
Lori Jackson	The Mathews SEAC hosted the Grand Opening of their Parent Resource Center at Mathews Memorial Library on September 4. It is a joint effort of the Mathews County Public Schools, The Mathews County SEAC and the Mathews Memorial Library. We have been working on recruiting new members for the Mathews SEAC. I am currently networking with the other SEACs in regions 3.
Bernadette Jones	oral
Jackie Myal	Dr. Toni Elitharp embraced a strategy to involve community members in Pulaski County to offer wrap around services to the students and their families. Initially, this project was introduced by inviting community members to visit schools and use flash card style learning sessions with children classified with special needs to enable these students to improve their SOL scores. This community outreach has multiplied and is being successful in a variety of settings.
Jacqueline Nelson	None
Jennifer O'Berry Ham	Absent
Peter Squire	<p>*October Is Virginia Disability History and Awareness Month! *</p> <p>During its 2009 session, the Virginia *General Assembly* adopted *Senate Joint Resolution 321* designating October as *Disability History and Awareness Month* in Virginia. The resolution specifically cites four principles on which the *Americans with Disabilities Act*(ADA), and its predecessor the *Virginians with Disabilities Act* (VDA), are based:</p> <p>"Inclusion, full participation, economic self-sufficiency, and equality of opportunity for all people with disabilities." It further cites the prevalence of disabilities among Virginians and their impact on individual citizens, their families and caregivers, and society in general. In passing the resolution, the General Assembly called upon the Governor "to encourage the people of the Commonwealth, including public schools, institutions of higher education, the</p>

Constituency Reports

Name	Report
	<p>business and corporate community, civic and advocacy organizations, the faith community, and other interested entities, through education and other appropriate activities, programs, and events to promote and highlight Disability History and Awareness Month in Virginia.”</p> <p>In the resolution, the General Assembly also recognized the efforts of alumni of the *Youth Leadership Forum* (YLF), sponsored by the *Virginia Board for People with Disabilities*, whose advocacy efforts prompted the legislature’s action. Following passage of the resolution, those YLF alumni, with support from parents, teachers, and the Virginia Board, the *Partnership for People with Disabilities* at Virginia Commonwealth University, the *Virginia Department of Education*’s Division of Special Education and Student Services, and the *Technical Assistance and Training Center* at Radford University, developed a bank of resources to increase students’ understanding and awareness and to support development of activities to commemorate Disability History and Awareness Month in their schools and communities.</p> <p>Links to those and other *resources*, as well as to the General Assembly’s joint resolution, ADA, and VDA, have been posted at *www.vaboard.org/october.htm <http://www.vaboard.org/october.htm>* to encourage commemorative and educational activities all across the Commonwealth which will, in the words of the General Assembly’s</p> <p>Resolution: “increase public awareness and respect for persons with disabilities, inform the public concerning their many contributions to society...and emphasize the abilities and rights of disabled persons.”</p>
Tamara Temoney	Absent
Carletta Wilson	None
Kathy Maybee (PEATC)	<p>As Virginia’s parent training and information center, PEATC’s responsibilities include training and educating parents and professionals who call us for assistance and providing support and resources to parents. We are here to empower parents of children and youth with disabilities in their role as parents, decision makers and advocates for their children and to promote partnerships among parents and professionals.</p> <p><u>Virginia Special Education Regulations’ Trainings by VDOE</u></p> <p>The office of Special Education Dispute Resolution and Administrative Services has agreed to assist PEATC by providing five trainings on the new special education opportunity to learn about changes to the Virginia special education regulations and to have their questions answered. There have been three trainings (Marshall, Cumberland and Blacksburg) conducted so far, with two other scheduled in Norfolk and Lynchburg.</p> <p>Once the VDOE presentations are concluded, PEATC is scheduled to continue the</p>

Constituency Reports	
Name	Report
	trainings in other localities throughout Virginia. We are also helping to advertise any other training that is scheduled with other organizations so that parents and professionals have as many opportunities as possible to attend a training on this important information.

Public Comment Review from Thursday a.m. and Thursday p.m.

Dr. Behrmann reviewed the public comment received on Thursday. Dr. Abrams agreed to follow up.

Suggestions for Future Agenda Items

State Assessment: VGLA Stakeholder Meeting Report, Modified Assessment Update
 Response to Intervention Implementation Update
 Joint Legislative Audit Commission Study on Autism
 State Performance Plan-Annual Performance Report & Discipline Disproportionality Data

Future Meetings

February 11-12, 2010
 April 15-16, 2010
 July 15-16, 2010
October 14-15, 2010