

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL POPULATIONS

January 11, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. with the following Board members and Board support staff present: Shirley Brandman (chair), Phil Kauffman, Laura Steinberg, and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Staff members present: Judy Pattik, Chrisandra Richardson, Diane Mohr, Sean Bulson, Frieda Lacey, Gwen Mason, Steve Zagami, Maureen Ryan, and Lori-Christina Webb.

Other attendees: Kay Romero and community members.

Minutes

The minutes from November 9, 2009, were approved as presented.

Level 1 Alternative Program Review

Ms. Mohr provided a general overview of the Level 1 Alternative Program explaining that the program's purpose is to provide direct academic, social/emotional instruction and behavior management strategies with the goal of having students remain in the mainstream of school activities. Mr. Bulson explained that each school has the flexibility to decide which students are eligible for Level 1 Alternative Program supports, within set criteria, and to design their Level 1 program to meet the needs of their students. While this can lead to inconsistency among schools, it also allows for variability of needs. He went on to say that until last year, all secondary schools received a 1.0 FTE allocation; however this year, there was a total 48 FTE allocations for all secondary schools. The data system is being modified to be able to "flag" students in a Level 1 program, which is a critical first step needed to evaluate program effectiveness. In the meantime, OSP requires feedback about each school's program as part of their ongoing monitoring activities.

Committee members recognized and accepted the need for flexibility, but said they simultaneously need assurances that students are being identified for the program and that allocated resources are being used effectively. Staff agreed and currently requires information from all schools to meet that end, acknowledging that there is an inherent tension between the monitoring programs and service delivery. Dr. Lacey said she believes it is important to provide an opportunity for Level 1 staff to share best practices and suggested that an M-Stat could be used for that purpose.

Mr. Zagami provided information on how the Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) process is used to support Level 1 students. Specifically, he shared that a module on *myMCPS* has been created into which interventions can be documented. In doing so, an informal process can be used to monitor student progress and to assist with providing supports, including when the student is transitioning out of a Level 1 program and back into the general school program.

ACTION: More in the future reports on continuous improvement; how is Level 1

Alternative program defined; best practices; documents on interventions; how do the three levels work together; how many students in the high school program.

Update on Learning Center Transition Students

Ms. Mason began the update by sharing that there are 162 former learning center students enrolled in their home or consortia school, each being provided case management services. She said that staff continues to follow through on April 2009 recommendations that include providing training, opportunities, and support for co-teaching, differentiated instruction, developing students' social skills, parent feedback, as well as monitoring student performance.

She went on to share that systemwide professional development has included collaboration among offices (OCIP, OSESS and OOD), as well as specific training for general and special education co-teaching teams. Additionally, speech and language pathologists, as well as counselors, have been trained to deliver social skills training, and job embedded training has been developed in response to individual school needs.

Committee members asked how much training a teacher needs, how staff is monitoring teacher training, and if they are confident that training has occurred. Ms. Mason said that the amount of training varies, depending on each teacher's experiences, and said that she has worked closely with OOD to ensure that any required training has been completed. For example, lists of teachers new to co-teaching are provided to OOD. Ms. Mason said that she has personally verified that the identified teachers have gone to training sessions by reviewing sign in sheets. Mrs. Richardson commented that each school also has internal processes to ensure that staff receives adequate professional development to serve all special education students.

Committee members also asked about differentiation. Ms. Mason explained that the varied staff development activities, as well as resource room model refinements, collaborative planning, and training for paraeducators, in effect, collectively build teacher capacity to differentiate instruction. Committee members also asked about the schools' social environments. Staff explained that case managers are tasked to identify areas of concern and to serve as a resource to help to make environments more welcoming.

Committee members asked about the measures of success. Staff said that in addition to academic indicators such as performance on assessments and course marks, the critical measure is meeting the goals identified on each student's IEP. Committee members also asked if there have been any due process hearings for transitioning students. Ms. Mason said she is not aware of any such instances.

ACTION: The committee asked for the following information – how are LC students doing on HSAs; compare MSAs in the spring with other MSAs; plans for first year of high school; additional interventions; and attention to social interactions.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.