Council On Educational Services

For Exceptional Children

North Carolina State Advisory Panel

2019 - 20 ANNUAL REPORT

Cynthia Daniels-Hall, Chairperson

Staff support provided by the

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Exceptional Children Division

Sherry Thomas, Director

**2019 - 2020 Annual Report**

**Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children**

**North Carolina Department of Public Instruction**

**Exceptional Children Division**

**Introduction**

The individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) requires that every state establish and maintain a state advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state. The federal regulations specify membership and require a majority, of the membership be parents of children with disabilities and individuals with disabilities.

Specifically, the regulations require the following membership include:

Parents of children with disabilities ages birth through 26

Individuals with disabilities

Teachers

Representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel

State and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities under subtitle B of title VII of the *McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act*

Administrators of programs for children with disabilities

Representatives of other state agencies involved in the financing and delivery of related services to children with disabilities

Representatives of private schools and public charter schools

Representative of vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities

Representative of the State Child Welfare agency responsible for foster care

Representative from the state Juvenile Justice and adult corrections agencies

The Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children

(CESEC) is established in accordance with Section 300.167-300.169 of the

federal regulations, Section 1412(a)(21) of the Individuals with Disabilities

Educational Act (IDEA 2004) and Section 115C-121.1 of the North Carolina

General Statutes as the State Advisory Panel to the State Board of

Education. The purpose of the Council is to:

• Advise the Board of unmet needs within the State in the education of

children with disabilities:

• Comment publicly on rules and regulations proposed by the Board

regarding the education of children with disabilities:

• Advise the Board in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the

United States Secretary of Education as required by IDEA:

• Advise the Board in developing corrective action plans to address

findings identified in federal monitoring reports required by IDEA:

• Assist the Board in developing and implementing policies related to the

coordination of services for students with disabilities; and

• Carry out any other responsibilities as designated by federal law or the

State Board of Education.

**Membership**

The Council shall consist of a minimum of 25 members. Currently, the

Council consists of 25 members - 17 appointees and 8 ex-officio.

Members are appointed by the Governor, President Pro Tem of the Senate,

the Speaker of the House, and the State Board of Education. Appointees

represent individuals with disabilities from the ranks of parents, teachers,

higher education, public and private schools, business/vocational

community, and charter schools. A majority of representatives shall be

parents of children with disabilities and persons with disabilities.

The term of appointment for members appointed by the State Board of

Education is four years. All other terms are two years.

The current list of members of the Council can be found at this web [address](https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/advisory-council)

<https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/advisory-council/2020-council-membership.pdf>

**Committee Organization**

The activities of the Council on Education Services for Exceptional Children are governed by the North Carolina State Board of Education bylaws for Advisory Committees. The CESEC delegates various subcommittees to monitor issues and concerns.

**Committee work:**

The Council operates four committees to help meet the legislative purpose of the Council. These committees are the Executive Committee, the Unmet Needs Committee, the Reports and Data Committee, and the Policy and Procedures Committee.

**The Executive Committee** – Cynthia Daniels-Hall, Chair

Primary Functions

• Set meeting agendas

* Draft the Annual Report

**The Unmet Needs Committee** - Diane Coffey, Chair

Primary Functions

* Identify unmet needs impacting Special Education in NC
* Establish priorities for the committee
* Determine topics for Council action relative to unmet needs of stakeholders involved in Special Education programs including students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

The **Reports & Data Committee** - vacant, chair

Primary Function

• Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

• Review data and advise on annual reports as needed.

**The Policies & Procedures Committee –** Christy Grant, Chair

Primary Function

• Comment publicly on rules or regulations proposed by the SEA

regarding the education of students with disabilities

• Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the

coordination of services for students with disabilities

* Revise the council’s by-laws
* Reviews and updates council operating procedures

Me**etings**

The Council meets four times a year. During the 2019-2020 year, meetings

were held on virtually on September 11, 2019, December 11, 2019, March 11, 2020, and June 10, 2020.

For the 2019-20 School Year, presentations were made by Department of Public Instruction I staff, as well as other agencies and organizations.

**Presentations:**

**September 2019:**

**Welcome, Introductions, Review of Agenda, Review of Meeting Minutes, Nominations for Chairperson, Vice Chairperson**

 Chairperson Leanna George called the meeting to order.  Council members provided self-introductions.  Anna Carter, Cache Owens, Cynthia Daniels-Hall, Jennifer Degen-Mullis and Kristin Hodges participated virtually.  Visitors also provided self-introductions.

 The Council approved the June meeting minutes without edits.

 Leanna advised the Council she would be willing to serve a second term as Chairperson but is willing to accept any recommendations.  Christy Hutchinson was a recommendation as an officer if the Chair or Vice Chair are stepping down.  Council was advised to submit recommendations by lunchtime and voting will take place later in the afternoon.  However, in reviewing the Bylaws, the Chairperson is allowed to only serve a one-year term.

**Mental Health First Aid**

 **REBECCA WILL FURNISH UPTODATE FACTS/FIGURES AND #S**

 Presenter Rebecca Fescina is a former EC teacher, certified Youth Mental Health First Aid trainer and works closely with Johnston Co Schools.  She also works with PTAs and conducts community education around mental health and does presentations/trainings outside of the classroom including the caregiver aspect.

 Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is the national/worldwide intervention piece for a person developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.  The purpose is to provide “first aid” not a diagnosis or treatment.

 The MHFA training is an 8-hour workshop generally with two trainers.  Participants learn risk factors and warning signs of mental health and substance use problems; information on depression, anxiety, trauma, psychosis and substance abuse; a 5-step action plan to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or in crisis; and the available evidence-based professional, peer and self-help resources locally and nationally.

 ALEGEE is the acronym used for:

**A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm

**L**isten nonjudgmentally

**G**ive reassurance and information

**E**ncourage appropriate professional help

**E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies

 ALEGEE is the “process” to use in working with potential mental health first aid.

 Why Mental Health First Aid? Mental health problems are common and learn how to notice when someone needs help; Stigma is associated with mental health problems and MHFA promotes understanding; Professional help is not always on hand and learn to encourage community members to support one another; individuals with mental health problems often do not seek help and learn to help more people get the help they need and many people are not well informed and don’t know how to respond and learn how to intervene.  It may save a life.

 Many people in various scenarios have four (4) great reasons to become a mental health first aider; 1-be prepared; 2-mental illnesses are common; 3-you care; and 4-you can help someone.  The overarching purpose is to intervene and link that person with resources based on each individual situation.

 In NC, there are approximately 72,000 MHFA trained individuals.  Alliance Health has 16 trained trainers in adult and youth mental health first aid.  School guidance counselors, social workers, teachers, administrators are some of the trained individuals but “appropriate people” to train varies per school/school system/organization.

There are various training modules to include a focus on various populations such as military with PSD and other disorders; higher education to focus on college and university students, first responders/law enforcement/public safety, etc.  People with increased stress factors correlate to increased suicide attempts (or successes).  Alliance Health website provides training opportunities and residence of training location is not required.

 There is common verbiage used relative to MHFA which is to encourage people to learn the skills, to help people experiencing a mental health or substance abuse challenge because anyone, anywhere can be the difference in someone’s life.

 While extremely beneficial, MHFA training is not free.  Training manuals are $20 each.  However, Rebecca does conduct free community youth mental health first aid with an open forum format.  MHFA closed courses are also offered for organizations.  MHFA is important to employers because 1 in 5 American adults experience a mental illness each year; employer face an estimated $80-$100 billion indirect costs relating to mental illness and substance abuse; and 10.8 million fulltime workers have a substance use disorder.  Organization training helps employees on all levels.

Government Support – The Mental Health First Aid Act of 2015 authorized $20 million for mental health first aid to be offered to emergency services personnel, police, teachers/school administrators, primary care professionals, students, and others.  Annual appropriations are $15 million.

 Youth MHFA is Rebecca’s specialty and it introduces participants to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents and builds understanding of the importance of early intervention.

**ECATS Demo**

 Carol Ann Hudgens, Section Chief for Policy, Monitoring and Audit, went through the various screens within the ECATS system and provided screen explanations and provide clarity to Council questions about the screens.

**Annual Report**

Is an ongoing document in process.  It appears the Annual Report will be completed and ready to submit to the State Board of Education in January.

**Public Comments**

There was one written public comment received relating to the ASD policy changes.  Some content was very specific, but most of the concerns have already been addressed and this parent has also participated in a ASD stakeholder group.

Three people signed up for public comment.

Parent 1 reported the child has not received FAPE and school not complying with federal and state regulations.  Parent utilized the formal complaint process with Office of Civil Rights and Exceptional Children Division.  Both processes finding

LEA in violation in May 2019.  The plan set forth corrective action with a completion date of July 1.  Public School Unit (PSU) corrective actions were not completed/complied with.  Parent cannot find anyone to provide guidance for next steps and DPI not responsive to emails/calls.  DPI has provided confusing/conflicting information along the way.  “Frustrated parents” group growing larger and is multi-county wide.  Parents are disappointed with DPI’s response to noncompliant LEAs.  Parent wants the Council to make it clear to the State Board of Education that every child deserves a free appropriate education.

 Parent 2 advised the Council that what they think, hope and believe is happening in schools is not actually happening in reality.  It’s a battle zone.  EC programs are a battleground and a struggle.  This parent’s concern tends to relate to dyslexic students Parent indicates the issues are systematic.  NC has reading proficiency rate of 39.6%.  This is not acceptable.  NC is failing as a whole; failing students and parent is begging NC DPI to do something about it.  PSUs do not follow the law and most do not know the law.  Status quo is not working at all for dyslexia, SLD, reading and math.  Structured literacy is suggested as way to teach reading.  Fact is balanced literacy and whole word should come off the curriculum table.  Please help our students.  It takes all of us including legislators.  Literacy is the key.

 Parent 3 indicated that asking for help should get easier, but it doesn’t.  Parent 3’s mother and grandmother were teachers.  Parent 3 has an 11 yr old AU daughter and high school son.  Daughter received services early in school.  Math programs in secondary education in Wake County are disastrous.  Parent knows programs are written by common core writers.  Programs based on group discovery learning, then re-directed to direct math instructions.  This is negative for sound-sensitive neurotypical students.  Student in turn received poor grades in math and re-took half of the tests/exams.  Student, even with parent assistance, was unable to complete math homework.  No resources were provided.  When Parent asked for resources only a workbook was provided.  The workbook only contained questions, no glossary, no formulas, no explanations.  This basically equated to the Parent being taken out of the academic equation all together.  Parent began to mistrust teachers.  Parent stresses that Wake County Schools should not be able to use curriculum without appropriate content.  In two years of middle school, son did not receive any services.

 The Council thanked the parents for their comments, concerns and the courage to come forth.

**Committee Work**

 The Council desired to address the concerns of public comments and inquired if B6 of the Bylaws (Carry out any other responsibility as designated by federal law or the State Board) could be a catalyst to help with districts that are in noncompliance with corrective action relative to due processes.   In general, the State Board or the federal government would have to specifically grant the Council the authority to act in a certain way and/or be given a directive.

 As a follow-up to the parent information shared on corrective action timelines, the Policy, Monitoring and Audit Section is responsible for this activity and does not abandon the situation and monitors each case until it is fully closed.  In worst case scenarios of prolonged, delayed completion, the PSU can have funds withheld as a consequence.  For prolonged, unresolved cumulative complaints, the PSU would be publicly noticed as noncompliance and would have to appear before the SBE to explain themselves.  The EC Division is federally, and by the state, mandated to ensure general supervision is being upheld.  Corrective actions don’t dissolve or just go away.

 The EC Division can share aggregate information, not case specific

 **Executive Committee**

According to the Bylaws, the Chairperson is allowed to serve a single one-year term.  So recommendations are needed for Chair and Vice-Chair so Council can vote.

 Leanna reported the AU stakeholder meeting went well.

 Executive Committee also suggested a change in agenda format.  For presentations, it was suggested that time be allotted for a thorough Q&A and 10-15 minutes for Council to discuss any possible recommendations to put forth in the Annual Report relative to the presentation

 Several subcommittees report the need for additional worktime between Council meetings.  Webinars could be the vehicle for additional committee work time.  Subcommittees do not fall within the open meeting laws so scheduling could be easier based on the subcommittee’s schedule.

 The Annual Report will add suicide protocols and Mental Health First Aid training as recommendations.  These recommendations apply to all children, not just EC.

 **Policies & Procedures**

 It was suggested that maybe the Bylaws could be changed to revise the quorum criteria.  Roberts Rules of Order indicates a quorum is 50% + 1 which is what is currently stated in Bylaws.  However, the terminology within the Bylaws could be changed to mirror changes within the membership numbers since it may not always be a constant number.  Any proposed change to the Bylaws would have to go through DPI attorneys.

 Filling membership vacancies is past due.  Membership needs legislative appts filled and a representative from Region 7.  Sherry Thomas will reach out to Cecilia Holden and Wade Butner to prompt the legislative appt. recommendations.  On a normal basis, elections should take place in March.

 With additional work time in place, this committee would like to work on soliciting more public comment.

**Reports & Data**

 Christy Hutchinson has agreed to chair this committee.  Cynthia Daniels-Hall was previous chair and remains on the Council.  This committee would like to secure information/data regarding Disproportionality warning lists from Nancy Johnson.  The purpose will be to plot data to discover if there are any statewide trends and any potential areas to address since December Council meeting includes a presentation on disproportionality.

**Agency Updates**

 Sherry Thomas, Director of Exceptional Children Division, provided updates.

ASD policy change approved by State Board of Education.  EC Division currently working on implementation plan with a target date of November 1 with resources to include a guidance document.   The plan is to develop guidance docs; one for administrators (You-Tube with voiceover); one for special education and general education teachers; and one for parents.  Reviewers’ feedback is due by Oct. 15, then an internal team will review feedback so stakeholders will review one document.  Again, with the goal of a November 1 completion date.  Then statewide training could begin.  The EC Division will report to the State Board in December on ASD activity status.  Full implementation target is January 1.

 Sherry commended the ASD stakeholder group for its positive engagement and she is hopeful productive stakeholder groups will rise again.

 Sherry has developed a new focus on parent engagement.  Social media is a great tool if not used for negativity.  EC Division will contact parent advocacy groups and offer up to five, free parent registrations to the EC Conference.  ECAC, Family First, Easter Seals, TEACCH.  Council can let Sherry know of any additional parent groups.  Additionally, parents also receive a discounted conference rate.

 EC Division has created a parent listserv.  Parents can sign up via DPI website. The intent of the listserv is to provide resources for parents.  Items will include “having public comment” on xyz topic, instructional practices, conference info, and policy changes are typical items.  Can also use this to solicit Council parent vacancies.  Sometimes there will be structured feedback portal (surveys).

 New parent liaison, Alexis Utz, coming onboard Monday.  Once settled, this listserv will be “owned/monitored” by parent liaison.

 Some priorities for EC Division work include second-round meetings with the adaptive curriculum and working with teachers to clarify, provide teacher support and how to help unprepared teachers.  Cleaning up the *Policies* – editing for types, SLD passed in 2015 which moves away from using discrepancy model to looking at RtI model.  *Policies* currently state implementation is 2020 and it needs some clean up.  *Policies* will go to State Board for final approval of edits.

Matt Hoskins was officially introduced as the new Assistant Director for the EC Division.  Matt provided introductory statements and offered his services to the Council.

The EC Conference is Nov 20-21 at Koury Convention Center in Greensboro.  Council members receive free general conference registration by using the following registration code:  Code:  #69EC19.

The meeting adjourned.

**December 2019:**

**March 2020:**

**Welcome, Call to Order, Introductions, Review of Agenda, Review of Meeting Minutes – December**

Chairperson Leanna George called the meeting to order.  Council members provided self-introductions and reviewed the day’s agenda.

The December Summary of Actions was reviewed.  The Council approved the December Summary of Actions without edits.

**State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report**

Nancy Johnson, State Coordinator for State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report gave a brief background for those new council members about the State Performance Plan and the Annual Report. Her Power point presentation was spent discussing setting targets for some of the indicators. There were several questions from the council and a few from visitors. The council was later provided with a revised copy of the APR targets.

**Agency Updates**

Matt Hoskins, EC Division Assistant Director, provided agency updates. SLD policy addendum will go into effect on July 1, 2020. On December 2, 2019, a stakeholder meeting was held to look at some of the language included in the current policy that has already passed by SBE. There were several groups represented including some representation from the Council, groups representing Dyslexia, and institutes of higher education. DPI was in attendance to clarify the potential intent or context of the language that is included in the policy.

The EC Conference was held November 19-22, 2019. It was a great success. There were 14 institutes on the 19th, 1,400 people were in attendance. The institutes allow attendees to spend a full day on a particular subject. On the 20th – 22nd there were over 2,400 people in attendance. There were over 95 sessions. The evaluation feedback was all very positive.

The next update dealt with the autism policy. Changes were taken to the SBE and have been passed. The Autism consultants are out in the field, training on the implementation of the new policy. A guidance document has been completed for the field for teachers to use. It will be converted into a language-friendly guide for parents.

The last update was the work of school mental health. For the past three years, the NC School Mental Health Initiative continues to bring educators, advocates, and policymakers together to discuss how the system can be improved and how to better align what is happening in the schools with what is happening with community-based mental health. A grant was awarded for $8.8 million over five years to begin implementing some of the recommendations to the NC Project Activate. Project Activate is running with staff from Cleveland, Rockingham and Beaufort Counties.

**Recognition of Chair/Vice-Chair**

 Matt Hoskins expressed his gratitude to the Council for all their work supporting children across the state with disabilities. He then recognized Vice-Chairman Cynthia Daniels-Hall and Chairman Leanna George. They both gave comments of appreciation.

**Nominations for Chair/Vice-Chair**

 Alexis Utz conducted the nomination process through Mentimeter. After lunch, voting took place. Cynthia Daniels-Hall was voted as Chairman, Christy Hutchinson, Vice-Chairman. Leanna George finished carrying out the remainder of the meeting.

**Public Comments**

Five people signed up for public comment.

Parent 1 reported that her child was privately diagnosed with dyslexia after the district refused to evaluate him. She feels that all her requests for help are being ignored.

 Parent 2 reported that she is concerned that teachers/educators do not have adequate training on dyslexia and how to identify it.

 Parent 3 reported that she has a 4th grader who can’t read or write. He is currently playing travel ice hockey, doing drills that NHL players can do, so he is capable of listening and following steps, so why can’t he succeed in reading and writing. She is doing everything she can as a parent. She is concerned that the curriculum is not positively affecting these students like her son.

 Parent 4 reported that her child is dyslexic, and although her teachers are kind and caring, they do not know how to remediate her. In IEP meetings, she was going into the meetings explaining six-syllable types, and what an r-controlled vowel was to the teachers. They did not know. She feels that there is a huge knowledge gap. The State of North Carolina needs to embrace the science of reading.

 Parent 5 reported her daughter, who was in attendance with her, does not go to public school. She has private tutors to teach her how to read, write, spell and do math because she is dyslexic, she has dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. She feels that public schools do not value children who are different. Teachers do not know how to properly remediate dyslexic children, because they do not know the scientific and structured way to teach.

**Upcoming Policy Proposal - Dispute Resolution Annual Report(s)**

 Teresa King, Dispute Resolution Consultant, gave policy updates on behalf of Carol Ann Hudgens, Section Chief for PMA.

 An internal EC Division workgroup has been initiated to review definitions that go with the Definitions of Evaluations and Screenings portion of the policy. The purpose is to ensure that the definitions are comprehensive. The review is not intended to alter the eligibility requirements for disability categories. The timeline for the review is tentative. The internal workgroup will put forth its proposals by January 1, 2020, to the EC Division leadership team. The leadership team will provide feedback and recommendations to the internal group. February through March there will be public comment periods to include Council representation. April and May, a proposal will be made to the State Board and Implementation with a date of July 2020.

 The Dispute Resolution annual report consists of 2018-2019 data. The information is also found on NCDPI’s website. The total complaints filed was 130. The Department issued 96 reports. There were 73 non-compliant. 93 reports were issued within the 60-day timeline. Two were issued with extended timelines. 34 complaints were withdrawn or dismissed. Currently, no complaints are pending from the 2018-2019 school year.

 Mediation requests were 83. Of those 83, 48 mediations were held. The Due process complaints that were filed were 92. Of those, there were 38 resolution meetings. Some of those fully adjudicated.

After the reports from Mrs. King, Cynthia Daniels-Hall and the Council discussed the data from Nancy Johnson’s presentation further.

The meeting adjourned.

**June 2020:**

**Welcome, Call to Order, Introductions, Review of Agenda, Review of Meeting Minutes – March**

Chairperson Cynthia Daniels-Hall called the virtual meeting to order.  Council members provided self-introductions and reviewed the day’s agenda.

The December Summary of Actions was reviewed.  The Council approved the December Summary of Actions with one edit of the date. It was decided at that time to forego committee work, since it was a virtual meeting, and it would be difficult to break into groups.

**OSEP Visit Debrief**

Carol Ann Hudgens started the conversation acknowledging that there were many Council members present during the Office of Special Ed Programs visit the last week of January 2020. Their last visit was in 2011. A couple of things constitute a visit from OSEP. In our situation, we have a new director, and another element is that in North Carolina, we have a large IDEA grant. OSEP wants to be certain that we are allocating the grant and monitoring the funds appropriately.

 OSEP conducted three days of interviews here at NCDPI, and the other days, they visited schools. They visited Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Wake, and Wilson Counties. They spoke with teachers, school leadership, and district leadership.

 Council members who were in attendance expressed how impressed they were in the process and how well NCDPI handled the interviews.

 A formal report from OSEP is expected 120 days after the visit.

**AU Policy Changes**

Carol Ann Hudgens provided details around the AU policy. She offered clarification to be certain that our council and families and anyone who is participating understands the requirements and when the requirements go into effect for individuals who are suspected of having autism as a disability or individuals that may be entering into the reevaluation process since the new policies went into effect.

-There are new NC required screenings/evaluations, motor screening and sensory processing evaluation. Due to this change, the reevaluation meetings (or triennial) should be scheduled well in advance to obtain these evaluations, if necessary.

-Reevaluation to obtain these new screenings/evaluations only need to occur during the triennial cycle or if the IEP team determines additional testing is needed. If will not cause automatic statewide retesting of children identified under the Autism category.

-The policy went into effect on January 1st, 2020. Any child referred for the first time, where autism was the suspected disability, must adhere to this policy. This includes reviewing all existing data which may already include motor and sensory processing information. These screenings/evaluations need only be requested if this information is not present.

-There are several reasons a reevaluation could be conducted. 1- programming and 2- eligibility

1- Data needed for programming does not require teams to discuss if the child remains eligible for special education. It is data collected for the purposes of addressing the child's unique learning needs.

2- When eligibility is discussed by IEP teams, they must ensure all required evaluations and screenings have been conducted to ensure adequate information is present to make the determination.

-An IEP team, in consultation with the parents, can determine that additional evaluations are not needed at the time of the triennial. This is acceptable if there is extensive data present to develop a good IEP for the student.

-Timeline for conducting evaluations when requested: The regulations state they must be conducted in a reasonable time but there is no specific timeline mentioned. Each situation requesting a reevaluation is unique as to what is considered reasonable.

-The new requirement for a motor screening and sensory processing evaluation should not render previously eligible students with a history of well-documented results under autism to no longer be eligible for services.

**Public Comments**

One person signed in for public comments.

Public Speaker: Parent of a child with dyslexia and dysgraphia. The child was removed from the school system after he was refused an evaluation for testing for a suspected learning difference.

 Speaker wanted to give feedback from a growing number of parents who are stating that their children are being placed on an IEP under categories that they feel are inappropriate. Parents feel that this is a disturbing trend and feel that they should be at the forefront of the decision-makers on the IEP team.

**Agency Updates**

Director Sherry Thomas gave updates via a slide presentation.

Updates: EC Division has several new staff. PMA has new consultant Libby Loring. SPD has new IDEA fiscal monitor, Adam Parent. STARS has a new occupational therapy consultant, Bridgette LeCompte. There have been two shifts in roles. Jennifer Sims and Khaliliah O’Farrow-Boulware, who were previously in CECAS delivery team, are now on the SPD team as User Support Specialists.

 Director Thomas acknowledged the Council members who attended the OSEP visit. She gave brief summary of the OSEP visit. The visit consisted of five days. Three of those days were in the NCDPI building, and two were out in districts. With the visits in the building, the focus was our SLD policy and the Multi-Tiered System of Support framework that we have in place across the state. They also looked at how we do our program monitoring, and how we look at compliance. They monitored the state complaint process. Especially complaints around Child Find, due process, corrective actions and how we follow up. During the district visits, OSEP was looking at learning disabilities to see if there has been a delay of referral or eligibility determination due to a Multi-Tiered System of Support or an intervention process that was delaying those referrals to happen as well as looking at private psychiatric residential treatment facility placement, if schools have been engaged in that process, if they have had any interaction with those areas.  As a result of a debrief with OSEP, Director Thomas happily reported that there were no red flags in the conversations with the districts. There should be a report within 120 days of the visit.

Read to Achieve: There have been some heavy traffic around the Read to Achieve requirements and ensuring that all students with disabilities are participating. A memo was sent out on January 29, 2020, that stated all students with disabilities shall participate in I-station.

Reading Camps: Third grade students who meet the good cause exemption will become a low priority for Reading Camp because the goal is to increase the student’s knowledge so that they can meet their target and not be retained.

State Budget: We have a continuation of last year’s budget. Everything allotted for the from a state level has been the same amounts in the ’18-’19 fiscal year.

Good news: A contract was approved to work with the Council for Exceptional Children’s national office to develop a program for new teachers in special education. This is for certified teachers with first year in the classroom experience. It will pay for them to be a member of the Council.

More good news: A new grant system where the districts can apply for the subrecipient IDEA grant. The preschool grant has merged with the K-12 grant, so they will complete one grant with both components in place which will save time for the directors.

SLD Policy update: The policy that was approved in 2016 by the State Board that goes into effect July 1, 2020. There was a stakeholder meeting held in November to look at the language that was problematic. The things that came out of the meeting were

* To define research intervention or evidence-based research intervention.
* To remove language that is related to group comparisons among culturally similar peers.
* Defining SLD as a disorder instead of disability

**Announcements**

 There was a question around current membership and making sure all vacancies were filled. The priority in filling vacancies are parents or individuals with disabilities. Sherry Thomas has been working on legislative appointments with a liaison on both sides to encourage them to fill that position or renew a term.

 Chairperson Cynthia Daniels-Hall suggested Alexis Utz, Parent Liaison, would be a good point person to speak with the various special education advisory committee in the areas that the council does not have representation.

After the break, there were no additional public comments and no other business to discuss, so a motion was carried that the meeting be adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 12:33 pm.

**Recommendations:**