

COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

September 9, 2020

Summary of Actions

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

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

The March Summary of Actions was reviewed. The Council approved the March Summary of Actions with no comments or edits. Alexis Utz provided instructions for the Public Comment procedures.

ECAC Presentation -Cache' Owens

The ECAC Survey was posted and within 24 hours, had about 500 responses. It was left open for one week, and the end results were about 1100 responses, with a small portion being from Spanish-speaking families.

The top needs were focused on technology and understanding how to navigate using remote learning platforms. A lot of families are in rural areas and do not have internet or an actual device to use. The 5th top need was families struggling to meet basic needs. Challenges with housing security and food needs gave a snapshot of what our families were dealing with.

Resources for families is being put together for families for specific contacts for specific needs, so they can be easily found.

The survey will be revisited during the summer to see if any of the circumstances have changed or stayed the same for the families.

SLD/Agency Updates

Exceptional Children Division Director, Sherry H. Thomas addressed the Council. There has been updates to the DPI website with Covid-19 information and Remote Learning resources. Within that page, there is a link specific for Students with Disabilities. It is a public site for teachers, parents, EC Directors or anyone in administration.

The State Board has approved the requirements for the '20-21 Remote Learning Instruction Plan, and these are instruction plans that must be developed at the LEA level inclusive of all students. As of now, there is not a specific plan for how special ed will receive remote learning. The Legislation requested that certain criteria and components be included. It was to ensure that students have equal access to remote learning, but especially students with disabilities. They must be able to receive their specially designed instruction or 504 accommodations.

The Superintendent created a stakeholder group across the State of educators, parents, students, advocates, universities, related service providers. And so that large stakeholder group has been vetting the guidance from DHHS and from the Governor's Office and then moving that to the Department. There have been subcommittees created to support what remote learning will look like in the opening of school, what the opening of school requirements will be, again, based on DHHS and Department of Safety and the Governor's guidance through Executive Orders.

In 2016, the Board approved a new eligibility criteria policy for specific learning disabilities that eliminated the discrepancy model and requires considering a multitude of data including the response to instruction that was provided to the student prior to moving to that eligibility. There were some adjustments to the language in that policy that the Board approved and will be added to the website.

Impact of Covid-19

- WCPSS has had difficulty providing services for all children, but especially children with disabilities. These issues include hotspots, access to technology.

- Rowan County has some success. They are a one-to-one county from grades 3 to 12. All students have technology.
- Other issues revolved around internet access in rural areas. Parents and students working from home has caused internet speed to be very slow.
- Pre-school children was another area of concern because some parents struggled with keeping children's attention on Zoom calls.
- Parents coping with anxiety of Covid and having to become educators overnight.
- ESL students weren't able to get proper support at home or understand directions.

Unmet Needs Survey

The Unmet Needs Committee met on a conference call a month before Council meeting. It was discussed whether an Unmet Needs survey needed to be conducted.

The discussion centered around there being too many surveys and not wanting the parents being overwhelmed. It was suggested that since the ECAC already had a similar survey in the works, that the Council and ECAC could partner together to expand their outreach.

Public Comments

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Work

The goals and function of each committee were discussed before breaking into committee work.

The meeting adjourned at 11:43 am.