NEWPORT NEWS SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 27, 2007 MEETING

ATTENDANCE:


FROM THE CHAIR:
The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The minutes of the January 23, 2007 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:
No one gave comment at that time.

Program: Transition: How do you plan your child's IEP so that your child will be ready after high school? Marianne Moore, State Transition Coordinator from VDOE presented.

Transition is the process students and their families use to think about life after high school, to identify their desired outcomes, and to plan their community and school experiences to assure that the students acquire the knowledge and skills to achieve their goals. The transition planning process should enable the student to move successfully from school to postsecondary education and training, employment, independent living, and community participation based on the student's preferences, interests, and abilities.

Transition is an ongoing process, not an event. Also must think about the coursework your child will be taking in High School and plan starting in Middle School. Perform age-appropriate transition assessments (interests, strengths, and challenges). Make post secondary goals based on the present level of performance. Transition services include course of study (i.e. the type of diploma the child is aiming for). State the type of diploma track the child is aiming for, but don't list all classes. Transition services also include activities such as related services, specialized instruction, community experiences, employment, adult living, daily living skills, functional vocational evaluation. Include transition service statements. Also contact the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) early on to get a case open for your child. At the end of services offered by the school (either when the child graduates or ages out at 22 yrs.), the school will provide a Summary of Performance for the child.

The following information can be obtained from the VDOE website: http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/sped/transition/
• To secondary education
  o Helping Middle School Students Make the Transition into High School by Nancy B. Mizelle from LDOnline
  o GED

• To postsecondary education, school to work and community life
  o Transition Planning: A Team Effort, is a publication of the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, by Sharon deFur, Ed.D., School of Education, College of William and Mary that provides ideas and information on how students, families, school personnel, service providers, and others can work together to help students make a smooth transition. In particular, this document focuses on creative transition planning and services that use all the resources that exist in communities, not just the agencies that have traditionally been involved.
  o Virtual AP School

• From special education to adult services
  o School To Work Transition Services - Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services
  o Transition to Adult Life: A Shared Responsibility from the The Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services - Policy to Practice Guidebook
  o OLMSTEAD Act
    ▪ Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
    ▪ Work World
  o New York State - Vocational Rehabilitation Services for High School Students

• From special education to post secondary
  o College Quest
  o Life

The key to a successful transition is careful planning. Students must be actively involved in the planning process.

Virginia Intercommunity Transition Council (VITC) FACT SHEETS
Transition Services; Post Secondary Education; Employment; Living Independently; Student and Family; Empowerment; The Student's Voice: Self-Advocacy and Decision Making; Member Organizations

OLD BUSINESS:

• Public Comment Follow-up - The student who was sent an application for the Governor's school has been given accommodations to have the test read to her. A school on the South side had a student who had been given accommodations for application to the Governor's school for that region last year.
• Membership - The subcommittee is reviewing submitted applications.
• Unmet Needs - The subcommittee was contacted via email to start developing survey questions for different subgroups (SEAC members, students, teachers, admin). No further discussion has occurred. A couple parents, not on the SEAC have been invited to participate as well. The Chair requested a list of participants once the parents have responded if they are interest or not.
• Distribution of Bylaws - The Bylaws were distributed. No vote has been requested at this time for approval.

NEW BUSINESS:

• Location of the May SEAC Meeting - The May meeting will be held at the ARC of VA (2520 58 th St. in Hampton). Warren Mills will provide a tour of the facility as well. Further details on time and meeting room will be arranged.
• District-wide school uniforms (Does the SEAC want to submit a comment on this?) The school board member, Teddy Hicks, stated that there is a dress policy already in all the schools for appropriate dress. Requirements for school uniforms would have to be decided at the individual school level. Eighty percent (80%) of the parents whose children attend that school building would have to agree to even bring up a school uniform requirement for discussion. Mr. Hicks stated that the issue will not be up for school board discussion anytime soon.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: - One parent raised concerns about the conduct of one of her 10 yr old child's mainstream teacher. The parent stated her child's IEP is not being followed, seating arrangements are not conducive to accommodate her child's central auditory processing disorder, instructions are read in such a way that is confusing the child, and stress levels due to classroom environment are causing physical complications (e.g. hives).

SEAC COMMENT PERIOD: - Carl Brakman commented that the Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) for initial comments for the VA regulations had just ended on 2/23.

COMMITTEE/STAFF COMMENTS:

Professional development of our teachers of students with disabilities continued during the month of February. Elementary teachers met in a day long session with supervisors of Reading and Math to help them better understand the Standards of Learning objectives in those core content areas as they work to gather artifacts for the alternate assessments they are administering this year.

Teachers at all levels continued in their Wilson Reading Program training and the Behavior Management consultant was again in town for a week this month to work with both general and special education teachers on classroom management activities. The consultant, Dr. Geneva Woodruff will return again in April for the final follow-up activities as a part of this project.
Still other teachers took advantage of learning opportunities in Virginia Beach, Norfolk and Richmond, which dealt with teaching reading, transition, behavior management, the teaching of math and collaboration in the general classroom.

Michelle Jones, a teacher of students with disabilities was hired as the new Transition Program Administrator. Michelle will assume her new position on March 5th.

After working closely with the Human Resources Department for several months, a salary adjustment for our Educational Interpreters has been approved. This now places NNPS on par with other school divisions in the area in interpreter compensation and should serve to stem the flow of interpreters from NNPS to other school division once they have advanced to proficient levels of interpreting.

On a very sad note, in the past three weeks the Special Education Department lost two students who have been a part of the program for the Severe and Profound Disabilities. One student attended Crittenden Middle School and the other Kiln Creek Elementary School. Our thoughts and our sympathies are with the parents of these two children.

ADJOURNMENT:
The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:19 p.m.
ATTENDANCE:

SEAC MEMBERS: Sarah Russell, Carl Brakman, Maqbool Sheikh, Betty Anby, Chenelle Harris, George Flood, Richard Mills, Mary Beth Helsel, and Vera Hansley.
SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE: Teddy Hicks.

FROM THE CHAIR:
The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. The minutes of the November 28, 2006 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:
No one gave comment at that time.

Program: Transition: How do you plan your child’s IEP so that your child will be ready after high school? Marianne Moore, State Transition Coordinator from VDOE did not show. Parents who showed up for the program were offered by the Chair to provide their contact information if they would like to be notified when Transition information will next be presented or made available.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Mission Statement - Three mission statements were offered by the Chair for a vote. Nine voting members were present. The majority voted for the following as the mission statement for the NN SEAC:

The Newport News Public School Special Education Advisory Committee is comprised of parents of students with disabilities, persons with disabilities and community representatives. The mission of the SEAC is to work with the Special Education Department to help identify unmet needs of students with disabilities and advise the School Board accordingly.

- By-Laws - The Chair commented that the By-laws after approval will have page numbers added. A cursory review of proposed amendments was discussed by the Chair. Richard Mills requested that the amendments ensure a call is made to any SEAC member who has had three unexcused absences. An excused absence requires notification by phone or email to the Special Education office secretary (currently Bonnie Laine). The change would be drafted into the draft By-laws for a vote at the next SEAC meeting.
• Membership - The subcommittee is still taking applications. Applications were offered at the SEAC meeting as well to elicit parent membership. The subcommittee will convene in February to review applications received and make recommendations to the SEAC.
• Unmet Needs - The subcommittee decided to survey parents, teachers and staff regarding transition needs.
• Legislative comments – N/A
• New Rosters/check expiration dates – Rosters were handed out later in the program. No discussion occurred.
• Scheduling concerns in the middle school follow-up - Bob Pietrasanta met with some special education teachers and principals from a few schools regarding block scheduling that has been implemented for history and science classes in middle and high school. Previously, history and science were taught congruently throughout the school year. Block instruction now teaches history in one semester and science in the other semester. Under this format, testing can occur sooner for the same course content. However, students now only have one semester to learn the material for each course. For some students, especially those with educable mental disabilities, it is an extraordinary challenge. As a result of the meeting, students will be able to receive supplemental instruction by a qualified special education teacher for the course throughout the year. These students could then take the grade-level assessments at the end of the year.
• Public comment follow-up - Public comment follow-up has been moved from the New Business section of the agenda to the Old Business section of the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS:

• Ground rules - N/A
• Parking lot - N/A
• SEAC comment period - The Chair highlighted that the SEAC comment period is for SEAC members to voice objective special education concerns and comments to the committee. Comments specific to their own child should be presented using the public comment cards and during public comment periods.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: - One parent praised the NN staff for the progress her child has made over the past four years. Her child has moved from self-contained to honors math. Now new ground has to be forged as her child has been asked to apply for the Governor’s school for Science and Technology. This is the first time a student with an IEP has been asked to apply. The application requires a written pre-admission test; however reading happens to be an area of need for her daughter. The parent is asking if her daughter’s resource teacher can assist in helping read the test questions. Bob Pietrasanta is waiting to hear back from other Governor’s schools (at Norfolk or Chesapeake) to see if there has been any direction given at those schools regarding IEP driven accommodations. The parent would like to ensure students with disabilities are provided opportunities to attend such schools and be provided the necessary support to be successful at those schools.
SEAC COMMENT PERIOD: - Carl Brakman asked how a child’s Section 504 plan is disseminated to staff members providing services to that child. Glenn Whitlock stated that teachers meet with the parent to draft the 504 plan. It is left up to the child’s teacher to ensure the other staff members involved with the child receive a copy of the 504 plan.

COMMITTEE/STAFF COMMENTS:

The Special Education Annual December 1 [Child] Count has been finalized and the results show a reduction of 150 students receiving special education from the count completed on December 1, 2005. This is partially the result of fewer transfer students coming in to Newport News and also likely due to the Response to Intervention approach to the referral process. We will need to see how this affects our federal funding for the coming year.

We currently have Claire Born substituting for Pam Pressley who is out for the next several weeks. Claire has served as a special education teacher in the ED classroom for NNPS in the past, and also as a building administrator for many years. She recently retired as a principal from Isle of Wight County Schools and has been working diligently to fulfill the responsibilities of the Instructional Specialist for Emotional Disabilities.

We also have Bobby Sue Silvey temporarily acting in the capacity of Transition Specialist. Bobby Sue recently retired from the NNPS Career & Technical Education Department and was willing to assume many of Joan O’Brien’s responsibilities until a new Transition Program Administrator can be found. Interviews should take place next week.

Teams of teachers have been busy over the past two months reviewing and rewriting IEP Goals and Objectives to go into the Goal Bank for the new Oracle-based electronic IEP. As they are reviewed and approved, they will be placed into the program’s Goal Bank. The IEP is currently being tested by the NNPS Technology Department in an effort to find anything that may not work properly or may have been overlooked. When we being looking at the IEP document printed format, committee members who worked on the format two years ago will again be asked to participate in reviewing the new electronic IEP to determine if it is consistent with the decisions made by that committee.

ADJOURNMENT:
The Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:16 p.m.