

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION AD HOC COMMITTEE**

April 18, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. with the following Board members and support staff present: Shirley Brandman (chair), Steve Abrams, Sharon Cox, Roland Ikheloa, and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Staff present: Gwen Mason, Judy Pattik, Holli Swann, Peter Cahall, Denise DeCoste, and Kristin Secan.

Others present: None

MINUTES

The minutes from March 7, 2008, were approved, as presented.

REVIEW OF THE SIXTH GRADE UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) PILOTS

At the March meeting, there was a request to schedule a review of UDL in MCPS. Staff made a presentation with the following points:

Outreach and Collaboration to Promote UDL:

HIAT staff provided input on the MCPS Strategic Technology Plan in a meeting with Melissa Woods (OCTO). The following was discussed

- o computer resources (computers per classrooms)
- o software/web-based resources
- o digitized materials and textbooks
- o broaden training options
- o initiatives to promote, evaluate, and reward technology integration

An invitation from OCIP was received to add language regarding UDL to their section of the Strategic Plan -- HIAT staff provided input to the Online Curriculum Project team on the need for accessible materials to include:

- o reading assignments that can be read by Kurzweil
- o digitized worksheets
- o study supports

The Accessible Technology Steering Committee met quarterly to share concerns about technology resources, technical support, accessibility, and training. Field Operations and OCIP have worked collaboratively with Special Education to solve everyday issues. A subcommittee was recently formed to develop guidelines on access to BookShare. Bookshare received a US DOE grant to supply free digitized texts to eligible students in public schools.

The High Incidence Accessible Technology (HIAT) web site provides online resources to support UDL and received on average over 8,000 visits per month.

The HIAT team is also supporting a document sharing website called the "UDLShare" that contains instructional materials files that have been converted and digitally available for use in targeted 6th grade classrooms. HIAT staff has collaborated with content specialist in OCIP on this. Workshops on the availability of these files were shared with 3 targeted middle schools: Baker, Lakeland and Clemente Middle Schools. Participants' feedback indicated that this website had potential for use in classrooms with sufficient computer access.

E-TIPS training (Educators using Technology to Improve the Performance of Students) was available through classes at the CTI training center. Workshops and courses focused on UDL and infusing technology into classroom instruction. Over 350 MCPS staff are working to be acknowledged as E-TIPS Leaders.

Also, workshops for parents (Parent TIPS) were provided this year to help their children in the use of free text readers, internet-based materials, MS Word and Inspiration graphic organizers, MS Word to support revisions and edits, and use of PowerPoint and Photo Story for oral presentations. It was suggested by the committee that parent training could be announced in the principal's newsletter.

Mandatory "Best Practices" summer training will target 7th and 9th grade teams and continue the focus on co-teaching and UDL as a framework for frontloading strategies into instruction. The UDLShare website will expand to include accessible, digitized curriculum materials to support 7th and 9th grade students. School teams will have hands-on opportunities to explore these materials during the summer training sessions.

The committee was interested in information on technology resources that are available (PCs, etc.) that may be re-configured to meet the needs of UDL. Specifically, what are the policies and practices in place to utilize these resources to meet short-term goals? Also, the committee asked if there was a possibility of tapping IT resources outside MCPS.

It was noted that not all community superintendents are aware of the potential instructional value of UDL, and it was suggested that they be trained in order to spread UDL instruction for general and special education.

ACTION: Provide information on technology resources that are available (PCs, etc.) that may be re-configured to meet the needs of UDL. Specifically, what are the policies and practices in place to utilize these resources to meet short-term goals? Look at possibility of tapping IT resources outside MCPS. Explore several available options to build/share training opportunities for parents.

ORAL UPDATE ON THE DISPROPORTIONALITY REPORT

Staff reported that an action plan is being developed to accompany the final report looking at the disproportionate over-representation of minority students in special education. The action plan is still in draft form but centers around four **DRAFT** recommendations, as follows:

- 1) Provide enhanced professional development, especially in the area of cultural competence and evidence-based practices.
- 2) Increase and improve the focus on general education evidence-based intervention practices prior to referral for special education identification.
- 3) Evaluate, align, and/or consolidate primary prevention, early intervention problem solving, and referral processes.
- 4) Improve local school and systemwide accountability for implementation of recommended actions.

Discussion ensued regarding these recommendations. The committee suggested that there should be a review of the recommendation language to improve the clarity and to better communicate the specific actions and goals. Committee members commented that these recommendations seem to repeat strategies of the past and encouraged staff to reflect lessons learned from past efforts in the action plan. For example, the committee suggested that the action plan should reflect learnings from MCPS' implementation of the Collaboration Action Process (CAP) as to what interventions, if any, are having an impact on disproportionality.

ACTION: Update Committee with a timeframe for the action plan.

BRIEF REPORT ON SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFFING

Staff reported that the allocations for next year have been made working with the Office of School Performance (OSP). This year high schools will use the four-station teaching model. Staffing allocations take into account the need for self contained classes as well as co-taught classes. LAD programs are being closely re-evaluated for staffing. There was discussion of the challenges at elementary school where staffing impacts the ability to include special education students as appropriate in general education classes. Throughout the spring and summer, the allocations will be revisited with adjustments and possible additions of paraeducators based on requests from principals. Currently, there are only 19 reserve special education teachers which will be very limiting.

Action: Provide the Committee updates from the Special Education Staffing Plan work group once it is convened.

UPDATE ON AUTISM DATA/PROGRAMS

Staff provided committee members with an overview of services and programs

for students on the autism spectrum. Looking at trend data, there has been a significant increase in students identified with autism. In the 1997-98 school year, MCPS identified 65 students with autism. In the 2007-08 school year, MCPS was serving 1060 students identified with autism. Staff supplied a handout on programs located at schools with high numbers (10+) of students with autism. This handout listed all programs with the number of autistic students enrolled in each program/school. The committee was interested in a clear definition and range of intensities of the autism spectrum.

There was a discussion on the various intensities and the methodology used to educate those students. The majority of these students are served in their home schools. The placements range was from inclusion in the general education classroom to a self-contained program depending on the support needed by the student. Staff guided the committee through an overview of the different offerings at the elementary, middle and high school level for students with classic autism as well as high functioning autistic students and Aspergers syndrome students. Much of the discussion centered on the high school level. Churchill, Magruder and Rockville were identified as having Autism programs. Students with Aspergers at the high school level are largely served on the bridge programs located at Churchill and Gaithersburg. Staff indicated that roughly 30% of students with Aspergers return to their home school with support for high school; 30% are assigned to the bridge program and others are educated in LAD classes, non-public placements or dismissed from special education. Staff discussed the impact that the phase out of the learning centers had on this population as previously 13% of Aspergers students at the high school level were assigned to secondary learning centers. Staff discussed the prior plan to have a high school level Aspergers program at Walter Johnson but indicated that IEP placement decisions had not resulted in an enrollment that warranted a separate program to date. Staff discussed the format of the Bridge program as being well designed to meet the needs of socially vulnerable students and to provide adequate supports. Staff indicated that MCPS continues to review the needs of the growing student population in this area and is constantly reviewing the need to have a separate Aspergers program at the high school level.

The committee wanted to know about the behavioral supports and the difference between students who begin the Bridge program in middle school and those referred to the Bridge program in high school. The Committee asked to continue this discussion in the fall as MCPS continues to examine the population and how best to serve their needs.

Action:

- 1. Provide Board members with data explaining the break down on intensities for students of on the autism spectrum and indicate which areas of need are growing**

2. **Review secondary programs for autism in the fall by the committee**
3. **Invitation for committee members to tour Winston Churchill High School that has a Bridge and autism programs.**

UPDATE ON THE SECIT AGENDA

To be rescheduled.

REVIEW OF COMMITTEE CHARGE AND SCOPE OF WORK

Mr. Abrams, who had to leave the meeting, indicated his willingness to move forward with discussion of expanding the Committee scope. By consensus, the Committee decided to bring the draft resolution making this a standing committee and expanding the committee scope to include other special populations to the full Board for consideration in accordance with prior Committee discussion.

WORK PLAN

1. Receive updates on Special Education Staffing Plan
2. In the future, schedule Dr. Kolan regarding Transition Services
3. Follow up on autism data in the fall
4. Follow-up on ASHA Workload Recommendations
5. Review of Disproportionality Report once the action plan is completed
6. Update on Special Education Litigation Expenses

The next meeting of the committee will be held on May 16, 2008, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 120.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.