

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

April 8, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. with the following Board members and Board support staff present: Shirley Brandman (chair), Judy Docca, Philip Kauffman, Rebecca Smondrowski (Board member), Laura Steinberg (Staff Assistant), and Glenda Rose (recorder).

Staff members that were present: Cris Richardson, Lori-Christina Webb, Gwen Mason, Kia Middleton-Murphy, Julie Hall, and Heather Wilson.

Guests: Mark Hajjar, Danuta Wilson, Elena Dennis, and Amy Alvarado.

Minutes

The minutes from February 5, 2013, were approved.

The Committee focused on following up on the full Board's request to explore concerns raised about developing and implementing IEPs. The Committee began to define some specific areas of questions that could guide a comprehensive review or audit of special education processes, using as the framework IEP Development (i.e. identifying students, parental rights, outcomes, satisfaction with process etc.), IEP Implementation (i.e. compliance, fidelity, etc.), and IEP Disputes (i.e. facilitated meeting effectiveness, legal services, etc.).

After a review of pertinent MSDE and MCPS materials, the committee identified possible areas of inquiry, including IEPs requested but not granted by staff, parent satisfaction surveys, IEP changes without parental agreement, support for parents throughout IEP process, monitoring of progress on meeting IEP goals, effectiveness of services, variability of services across the school system, and staff retention. The Committee will meet again in May to continue the work.

**FOLLOWUPS**

Staff will provide the committee with currently available resource materials for parents provided both by MCPS and MSDE.

The meeting ended at 3:00 p.m.

## OVERALL CONCERNS RAISED BY BOARD

### **Developing IEPs—**

1. Are parents full parents?
  - How can the BOE assess whether parents are treated as full partners in the IEP process?
  - Questions were raised regarding access to records/consent to evaluation/ ability to ask questions of MCPS staff? How can the BOE assess whether there are “undue obstacles” placed in the path of parents who are advocating for the student’s needs?
  - When/how are parents given the right to visit proposed placements?
  - IEPs take effect even without parent signature—how often does this happen within MCPS?
  - Informing parents of the details of the IEP/FAPE process—is the MCPS process welcoming/collaborative? How do we advise students/parents of their rights? How can the process be improved?
  - How does MCPS assess student/parent satisfaction with the IEP process? Is there room for improvement? (e.g we do not currently survey students/parents where the result of the meeting is NO IEP). NOTE: Chris Richardson mentioned that MCPS does outreach to pre-school parents and will expand.
  - Focus groups with parents who have gone through mediation was also suggested.
  
2. Are we identifying the right students?
  - Over-identification of minority students for special education(I think this is monitored by the State and I think data exists for this.)
  - How can the BOE assess how often IEPs are being denied? whether IEPs are being systematically denied for certain disabilities?

### **Implementing IEPs –are we providing the services required by the IEP?**

- Full implementation/enforcement of services included in the IEP. How can the BOE assess whether MCPS “fully” complies with IEPs?
- Does MCPS provide services required by FAPE or services that “are available” given current resources?

### **Due Process Hearings**

- MCPS legal representation: does our counsel dismiss cases for failure to file proper paperwork even when the parents are not represented by counsel?
- How can the BOE assess the effectiveness/fairness of the facilitated IEP meetings?

### Other Issues:

- Need for closer analysis of the achievement gap for special education students.
- Does MCPS have a problem of losing special educators to general education?