



FROM COMPLIANCE TO QUALITY

IMPROVING SPECIAL EDUCATION IN BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Report to the Baltimore County Board of Education
by
Baltimore County Citizens Advisory Committee for Special Education

with support from
Department of State and Federal Programs
Baltimore County Public Schools

May 28, 2002

PARTICIPANTS

Teresa K. LaMaster, Chair
Jasmine Shriver, Vice Chair

Bev Andress
Ron Boone
Cheryl Bost
Karen Bowman
Margie Burgess
Barbara Cheswick
Jean Considine
Don Curtis
Terry Darr
Peggy DeCrispino
Ben Dubin
Stacey Durkovic
Sara Egorin-Hooper
Nancy Feeley
Michelle Flory
Marcella Franczkowski
Marjean Funn
Janet Furman
Judy Glass
Jill Harris
Drue Hodgetts

John Holland
Mary Pat Kahle
Cheryl Lisker
Theresa Lochte
Jerry Lynskey
Kelli Nelson
Mike McIntyre
Nicole Miller
Mary Pace
Paige Paibe
Linda Pierce
Joyce Reier
Margie Rofel
Jean Satterfield
Mary Scott
Jay Silverman
Ann-Marie Spakowski
Tom Stengel
Tracey Weinkam
Pam Weitz

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is imperative that special education operate as an integral part of a system that expects high achievement of all children, rather than as a means of avoiding accountability for children who are more challenging to educate or who have fallen behind.

Executive Order 13227
The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education
October 2, 2001

Suggesting that our responsibility to or aspirations for children with disabilities ends once we had complied with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would be akin to claiming that our responsibility to typically-developing kids ends once the state meets the Maryland Constitution's requirement of a "thorough and efficient" free public education. President Bush recognized this when he created the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education to address how special education programs could be refocused on quality and student achievement. While federal and state special education law provides a floor --- a minimum of what is required --- it speaks little to the ceiling, the hopes and aspirations we share for the achievement of children with disabilities.

In the fall of 2001, the Baltimore County Board of Education Citizens Advisory Committee for Special Education (CACSE) and Baltimore County Public Schools, with the support and participation of the Baltimore County Public Schools Department of State and Federal Programs, launched the Special Education Work Group Project. The purpose of the project was to begin to develop recommendations that would improve the quality of special education programs in Baltimore County.

Over several months, Work Groups comprised of parents of children with disabilities, BCPS central administration personnel, general and special education teachers, principals, special education liaisons and other concerned citizens considered five topics:

IEP PROCESS: Development of an increasingly efficient and effective IEP team process, including examination of referral and diagnostic procedures.

CURRICULUM: Effective, high quality curriculum for all special education programs at all levels.

INCLUSION: Development of an effective, research based inclusion model.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: Identification, generation, and analysis of student achievement data in order to improve instruction and services in special education programs.

COMMUNICATION: Improved and increased communications and collaboration with parent constituents.

One hour of the each monthly Citizens Advisory Committee for Special Education meetings was devoted to Work Group activities. The Work Groups also met in addition to those monthly meetings and consulted with a variety of experts both within and outside the Baltimore County Public Schools. The groups also consulted a variety of reading materials that are cited in the attached individual group reports.

In developing recommendations, Work Groups were asked to consider the topics below:

1. What are the current programs and practices in the Baltimore County Public Schools related to the topic you are considering? Use your personal experience and objective data to make your analysis.
2. What principles or core beliefs about your group topic guide you? On what experiences or data do you base those core beliefs?
3. What are the greatest needs that are revealed by the group's assessment of the current program/practices?
4. What are other school systems, in Maryland and across the country, doing in this area?
5. What are your key recommendations for improvement in your group's area of interest? What best practices and programs exist which may form the basis of recommendations for special education programs and services in the Baltimore County Public Schools?

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

Individual Work Groups developed recommendations on a variety of topics. Individual Work Group Reports are included in this report. Across groups key themes emerged which are captured in the priority recommendations listed below:

Recommendation 1 – Make the success and achievement of students with disabilities a critical component of evaluating the performance of both special and regular education teachers, principals, schools, and central administration personnel.

Every school must responsible for the achievement of each and every child in the building --- even those who are the most difficult to teach. While many principals throughout the system embrace their responsibilities to the children with disabilities, others fail to make our kids a priority. The myriad of decisions principals make --- from budgeting, to staffing, to goal-setting, to space planning, to curriculum --- and have implications for the kids with disabilities in

the building. Principals who take their responsibility to students with disabilities seriously consider our kids as part and parcel of their decision-making process.

Increasingly, rewards and sanctions for schools are parceled out based on the latest test scores. While many of our kids participate successfully in those testing programs, others either do not participate or are not seen as contributing high scores to the rising tide of achievement. Because our children do not contribute to the standard measures of a school's improvement they --- and perhaps more importantly their teachers --- may be marginalized and their work disvalued. We recommend that the school system needs to create specific accountability measures to be used to evaluate personnel performance for principals, teachers and central administrators that capture the unique ways our kids contribute to a school's success.

Recommendation 2 -- Improve processes for correctly identifying children who need special education services.

We share a concern that BCPS may both over *and* under identify children who need special education services. Of key concern are twin problems of the over identification of African American students --- especially boys --- in the emotional disturbance and mental retardation disability categories, and the under identification of students in primary grades with difficult to diagnose specific learning disabilities.

We applaud the use of academic intervention teams and the work of pupil support services as part of a coordinated, system-wide strategy to address these concerns. We remain concerned that these strategies are not consistently and equitably implemented on a system-wide basis. We also want to ensure that the rights guaranteed to students and their parents under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) related to assessment, identification, informed consent, and timelines for provision of services are protected as these related programs are implemented. To that end, we strongly recommend that BCPS establish an interdisciplinary workgroup with representatives from Student Services including psychological services, Special Programs K-12, Federal and State Programs including special education, IEP team chairmen, Assessment and Student Data, and Equity and Assurance to address the myriad of issues related to referral and diagnostic procedures, with an emphasis on overrepresentation of African American students in certain disability categories and in the most restrictive special education settings.

Recommendation 3 --- Develop school practices that create better opportunities for students with disabilities to be included in regular classrooms to the fullest extent possible.

Even though the IDEA has been law for over 25 years, BCPS still lacks a coherent approach to the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular classroom. The reason is simple: inclusion is difficult and expensive. While many had hoped that the push toward inclusion might be more cost effective than educating children in self-contained programs with only their disabled peers, the reality is that inclusion might be more resource intense.

We believe that each school should develop a core set of practices that foster the development and improvement of inclusion programs. Area Executive Directors should monitor and report on the development of these practices and help school administrators identify the resources they need to implement them as part of the regular budget process. The practices include:

- The school principal and IEP chairperson are supportive of and knowledgeable about inclusive practices.
- The school has a clear vision statement reflecting a philosophy of inclusion.
- The School Improvement Plan addresses school-based needs for including students with disabilities.
- The specific roles and responsibilities of special educators, general educators, resources teachers and instructional assistants for the adaptation and delivery of curriculum are clearly defined in writing.
- There is a specific, established time for collaborative planning and teaching built into the master schedule.
- Just because a student is included in a regular classroom does not mean that the student is taught in the same way as typically developing students. Teachers must differentiate instruction for a specific learner's needs. And teachers need the support --- through training, support personnel, and adapted curriculum packages --- to make that differentiation possible.
- Creative ways are used to support students across all subject areas within the general education curriculum such as, peer tutors, flexible scheduling, support programs, reduced class size, and reverse inclusion.
- Both special and general educators advance their knowledge and skills by pursuing a program of continuing education on strategies for teaching children with disabilities.

Recommendation 4 --- Ensure that students with disabilities develop reading skills to the fullest extent possible, whatever their age.

Like any parents, we want our children to be exposed to a rich and varied curriculum on a range of subject matters. Of critical concern to us, however, is reading. A comprehensive reading assessment system is needed for our students, in addition to the IEP and quarterly reports, that establishes benchmarks, helps special educators monitor progress, customize instruction, and prepare students for state and standardized tests and transitioning.

We are especially concerned about students who pass on through grade levels while their reading founders. Many of these students have disabilities but are working to receive a regular high school diploma. We believe a comprehensive research-based remedial reading program for students receiving a diploma in middle and high school who are reading significantly below grade level should be implemented. Also, many students with disabilities who working toward a high school certificate, who were not successful reading students in elementary school, reach a critical point of instruction in middle and high school. We strongly urge the development of a system wide reading curriculum at the middle and high school level for students taking IMAP that continues to emphasize direct/explicit instruction in reading and writing across content areas.

Recommendation 5 – Collect and publicly report data that describes the achievement of students with disabilities.

Just as the achievement of general education students is not measured by the grades that they receive on their report cards, the success and achievement of students with disabilities is not measured by their IEP progress reports. We seek standardized measures of student achievement whenever possible and the disaggregation of data for student achievement on a par with that collected and reported for children in general education. We believe good assessment data about special education students is essential in order for schools to make appropriate instructional decisions to increase student achievement for this population. The data currently available does not accomplish this. It must be expanded to include determinable breakdowns of special education students. In order for this to be accomplished, we recommend the following:

- Each and every time student-related data of any kind is reported --- either internally to BCPS or to the public --- it should be disaggregated by disability (as well as race, gender and poverty) to the fullest extent possible.
- BCPS staff together with the Citizens Advisory Committee for Special Education should develop a “Special Education Data Package” including a format and process for the generation, analysis, and communication of such data.
- BCPS procure a web-based IEP format with the ability for additional data fields to be determined at a later date. This should include a determination if the student was with the Infants and Toddlers Program.
- The BCPS Website includes a user-friendly interactive page to allow users to access assessment data for special education programs.
- BCPS should develop a Special Education Report Card to be available on the school system, including data from both standardized testing and related statistical information including graduation rates, level of participation in general curriculum, and the number of certified teachers.

- Staffing should be provided to allow for generation, formulation, analysis, and communication of the recommended data.

Recommendation 6 --- Better equip parents to be effective participants in their child's education.

The development of a child's Individualized Education Plan is the cornerstone of improved educational achievement for kids with disabilities. For the IEPs to improve, parents need to be more equal participants in the complex process of developing them. Many parents --- especially the working poor --- are at a great disadvantage as they have neither the time nor the resources to participate effectively. Without the necessary vigilance, their children may not get the programs and services they need to succeed. These parents and their children are our chief concern. We believe it is the school system's responsibility to help them be effective advocates for their children.

We believe that BCPS must simplify and multiply the ways it communicates with parents of children with disabilities. We recommend the development of a simple, one page "What to expect from an IEP team" handout be developed to accompany the more detailed (and difficult) Procedural Safeguards document sent to families. BCPS once a year should provide a complete resource packets for every parent of a child with a disability to include the to-be-developed Guide to BCPS Special Education programs, publications from MSDE and Maryland Disability Law Center, *A Special Edition* published annually by *Baltimore's Child Magazine*, and information on the Citizens Advisory Committee for Special Education. Although many of these publications are developed and printed free of charge, there is no consistent mechanism for their distribution.

We believe that for parents to be better equipped to participate in their children's education, IEP team members must be properly trained on how to support and work with parents. We recommend that the Office of Special Education expand staff development for IEP team members with a focus on the "Characteristics of Effective Team Chairpersons" (See page 9 and 10). We believe that parents should be used more consistently and frequently to train staff on how best to work together.

WORK GROUP REPORT: IEP TEAM

Congress declared that one of the central purposes of IDEA 1997 was to “expand and promote opportunities for parents, special education . . . and other personnel to work in new partnerships”

House Report 105-95, p82(1997)

Membership

Bev Andress

Don Curtis

Marcella Franczkowski

Janet Furman

Drue Hodgetts

Theresa Lochte

Kelli Nelson Co-chairperson

Nicole Miller

Joyce Reier

Margie Rofel Co-chairperson

Pam Weitz

1. Topic

Develop recommendations for an effective efficient IEP team process that encourages communication and collaboration.

2. Did you narrow the focus of your topic in any way?

Yes, we focused on the team process.

3. What, if any best practices or strengths did you identify?

See attached: Characteristics of Effective IEP Teams

4. What, if any, resources did you consult or rely on?

Experts-Dr. Carol Quirk MD Coalition for Inclusive Education

Dr. Gwen Cartledge, Ohio State University

Doug Little, JDL and Associates (Staff has participated this training)

Written Materials-

Essential Facilitation for Individualized Education Program Meetings, JDL and Assoc.

Individualized Education Program: A Team Process Overview. Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education. 2001.

IEP and Inclusion: Full Participation Through the IEP Process: A Guide for Parents, Teachers, Administrators, and Advocates. MD Coalition for Inclusive Education. 2000.

Keys to Communication and Teamwork. Maryland State Department of Education 2000—01.

NAACP Call for Action in Education. 2001

PART I: Advancing the Conversation: Over-Identification of Students of Color in Special Education: A Critical Overview. Artiles, Harry, Reschly, Chinn. 2002

Queen Anne’s County Administrators’s Inservice, “The Individualized Education Program for Students with Disabilities”. 10/01

“Sociocultural Implications of Specific Learning Disability Eligibility,” Howard County Public Schools (undated)

Student-Led IEPs: A Guide for Student Involvement. Council for Exceptional Children.2001

1. What key recommendations is your group making to improve special education in Baltimore County?

- That BCPS establish an interdisciplinary workgroup with representatives from Student Services including psychological services, Special Programs K-12, Federal and State Programs including special education, IEP team chairmen, Assessment and Student Data, and Equity and Assurance to address the myriad of issues related to referral and diagnostic procedures, with an emphasis on overrepresentation of African American students in certain disability categories and in the most restrictive special education settings.
- That the Office of Special Education, with input from the Resource Center for Families and Schools and the Citizens Advisory committee for Special Education, develop a one page “What to expect from the IEP team” to accompany the initial Procedural Safeguards document sent to a family.
- That the Office of Special Education continue to provide staff development for IEP team members with a focus on the “Characteristics of Effective Team Chairmen” utilizing parents in the training process.
- That an exit survey be developed and implemented to solicit input from families following IEP team meetings.

Characteristics of an Effective IEP Team

1. The team chairman is knowledgeable about parents' rights and is able to explain those rights to parents.
2. The purpose of the team and the roles of team members are stated clearly and are understood by all.
3. Team members' (chair, parent(s), regular education teacher, special education teacher, assessors, and related services staff) contributions are listened to and considered with respect. The role of the parent is critical, as parents:
 - Provide information about their child's abilities, interests, performance, and history;
 - Participate in the discussion about the child's needs
 - Join other team members in deciding how the student will participate in assessments and the general curriculum, what services the school system will provide and in what setting.
4. Team members remain flexible and open-minded.
5. Team members communicate clearly with limited use of jargon, acronyms, or unfamiliar terms.
6. Student progress is shared and celebrated.
7. Assessors orally share assessment results with the parent(s) prior to the team meeting.
8. Written assessment reports are provided to parents prior to or during the team.
9. Draft IEP goals are provided to the parents (preferably with personal contact) prior to the IEP team meeting.
10. All school staff, including team members, believes in the student's right to be included in general education and are committed to helping the student succeed.
11. The team chairperson understands state testing requirements and can explain MSPAP, IMAP, and High School Assessments.
12. The team chairman works to build consensus by exploring a variety of options through brain storming, prioritizing, and compromising.

13. Parents are provided with information and resources, such as the Resource Center for Families and Schools, to help with understanding their child's disability, accessing advocacy supports, etc.
14. Oral and/or written summary is given at the end of the meeting that indicates next steps and identifies those individuals responsible for follow-up.

WORK GROUP REPORT: CURRICULUM

Membership

Nancy Feeley

Mary Pat Kahle, Co-chairperson

Jean Satterfield

Jasmine Shriver

Ann-Marie Spakowski, Co-chairperson

FUNDAMENTAL TO ALL EDUCATION IS LITERACY. *Summary Findings from the National Reading Panel* (see attached) prompted the work group to focus primarily on reading instruction for students with special needs.

Best Practices:

General:

- Special Education reorganization –assignment of Director of Instruction, and Coordinator of Instructional Support.
- Collaboration between the Department of Special Education and Department of Elementary and Secondary Programs.
- Attendance of Special Education Resource Personnel at content area meetings and Department Chairman meetings.
- Staff Development for Principals and Assistant Principals related to Special Education issues (staffing, scheduling, special educators' roles and responsibilities, modifications, universal design, graduation requirements, etc.)

Best Practices Reading:

Elementary:

- Implementation of a countywide reading program, which includes the following:
 - SRA, *Open Court*
 - Houghton Mifflin Reading Program, *A Legacy of Literacy*
 - Additional resources for differentiating instruction for students with special needs

March 14, 2002

- Directive from Department of Elementary Education that all students receive two and one half hours of reading instruction in primary grades (1-3), and two hours of reading instruction in intermediate grades (4-5).
- Staff Development for Principals, Assistant Principals and Special Educators on ways to adapt Open Court and Houghton Mifflin.
- *Pro-Ed, Reading Milestones* and *Edmark Reading Programs* are being piloted in elementary, middle, and high schools, including special schools, for students who are not developmentally ready for Houghton Mifflin and Open Court.

Secondary:

- *Wilson Reading Systems* (remedial word identification program) is being piloted in two middle schools and will be piloted in more schools for the 2002-2003 school year.
- *SRA-Soar to Success* is being used in elementary and middle schools.
- Special Education Department Chairs met with Language Arts Department Chairs to address better ways to deliver special education services.

Recommendations:

- ❑ A comprehensive assessment system is needed for our students, in addition to the IEP and quarterly reports, that establishes benchmarks, helps special educators monitor progress, customize instruction, and prepare students for state and standardized tests and transitioning. These assessments should be closely aligned to the state mandated assessments.
- ❑ A comprehensive remedial reading program for students receiving a diploma in middle and high school, who are reading significantly below grade level, should be implemented. The program should be researched based.
- ❑ A system wide curriculum at the middle and high school level for students taking IMAP (who are often at the critical point of instruction) that continues to emphasize direct/explicit instruction in reading and writing across content areas.

March 14, 2002

Attachment: Summary Findings from the National Reading Panel

In 1997, Congress asked the Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to convene a panel to assess the status of research-based knowledge (of reading development and disability), including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read.

On April 13, 2000, the National Reading Panel officially released its report on scientific research-based reading instruction. The Panel found that for children to be good readers, they must be taught:

- phonemic awareness skills

“The panel found that the research conducted to date strongly support the concept that explicitly and systematically teaching children to manipulate phonemes significantly improves children’s reading and spelling abilities. The evidence for this is so clear cut that this method should be an important component of classroom reading instruction.”

- phonics skills

“The panel also concluded that research literature provides solid evidence that phonics instruction provides significant benefits for children from kindergarten through 6th grade and for children having difficulties learning to read. The greatest benefits were seen from systematic phonics instruction.”

- the ability to read fluently with accuracy, speed, and expression

“The panel also concluded that guided repeated oral reading procedures that included guidance from teachers, peers or parents had significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a range of grade levels.

- to apply reading comprehension strategies to enhance understanding and enjoyment of what they read

“The panel also found that reading comprehension of text is best facilitated by teaching students a variety of techniques and systematic strategies to assist in recall of information, question generation, and summarizing of information. The panel also found that teachers must provided with appropriate and intensive training to ensure that they know when and how to teach specific strategies.”

WORK GROUP REPORT: INCLUSION

Membership

Cheryl Bost

Margie Burgess

Ben Dubin

Sara Egorin-Hooper

Michelle Flory

Judy Glass

Jill Harris

John Holland

Cheryl Lisker

Regina Satterfield

Tracey Weinkam

Inclusion is an educational idea that developed in part from the concept of the instruction of special education students in the “least restrictive environment” (LRE). Also, influencing the development of inclusion, as an educational practice for disabled students was the Regular Education Initiative, which suggested that the relationship between special and regular education be revamped (Gear, Weishahn, Gerheart, 1996). LRE, under guidelines stipulated in federal regulations, states that consideration be given to placement and instruction of a student with a disability, in the school that he or she would normally attend, if not disabled. Inclusion is the practice of educating disabled students in the school and/or classroom where he or she would normally attend, for as much time as possible. Support and individualized instruction are provided for the child with disabilities. This instruction can take place in a variety of settings within the neighborhood school, based on the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP).

In an earlier historical perspective it was believed that educating the disabled separately from non-disabled was the best practice. Currently, however, it is not a consideration of whether to provide inclusion, but rather how to provide inclusion (Baker, Wang, Walberg, 1994). Baker, et. al. (1994) illustrates this critical point with the court decision Oberti v. Clemton, 1993. The decision supported the premise that children with disabilities had the right to be educated with non-disabled peers. In addition, evidence has repeatedly maintained that special education students do better in regular education classes. Staub and Peck (1994) identify five positive themes resulting from inclusion (pp. 37-39): These are:

- Reduced fear of human difference accompanied by increased comfort and awareness
- Growth in social cognition
- Improvements in self-concept
- Development of personal principles
- Warm and caring friendships

2. Strengths/best practices identified in BCPS at the present time:
 - Systematic training is provided for new teachers, IEP chairs, and department chairs at the secondary level.
 - Collaboration with the elementary and secondary offices in training regular and special educators in curriculum is on-going.
 - A “snapshot IEP” is used to provide information to general educators in all schools.
 - Some schools include collaborative planning time for students.
 - Some schools provide clear roles and responsibilities for general and special educators and instructional assistants.
 - Some schools provide services for students with moderate to severe disabilities in the general education setting.
 - Some schools analyze data related to the performance of students with IEPs and include strategies for improvement in the school plan.
 - Some schools use MAPS and other social support strategies for students with IEPs.
 - Some schools use peer tutors and volunteers to support students with IEPs.

3. Resources Used

Reading literature, Internet searches, and discussions with special educators and parents identified best practices. Carol Quirk, Ed.D of MCIE, MSDE, and Sara Egorin-Hooper, a staff member who teaches a course on inclusive practices at Johns Hopkins University, also provided information. We were especially impressed with a website of Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction Special Education, Olympia, WA, www.newhorizons.org/spneeds.

4. Best Practices for Inclusion

A draft of *Quality Indicators for Inclusive Schools* coauthored by Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, M.C.I.E., is reflected in the recommendations below. The Baltimore County Public Schools’ *Blueprint for Progress*, belief statements, is supportive of the recommendations as well.

- I. Quality Indicators:

The administration must be supportive and knowledgeable about inclusive practices.
The school must practice a “student first” philosophy.
The staff must be committed to developing the highest educational potential for all students.

Recommendations:

- Each school has a clear vision statement reflecting its philosophy of inclusion.
- School Improvement Plans address school-based needs for including students with disabilities.

- The roles and responsibilities of special educators, general educators and instructional assistants are clearly defined.
- There is an established collaboration time built into the master schedule.
- Assessment instruments and procedures are used to track student achievement.
- Record keeping practices and procedures are in place to provide accurate assessment data to administrators, colleagues, and parents.
- The schoolwide system for articulation is in place to facilitate the sharing of modifications and successful instructional strategies.
- Teachers differentiate instruction for a variety of learners' needs.
- Creative ways are used to support students across all subject areas within the general education curriculum such as, peer tutors, flexible scheduling, support programs, reduced class size, etc.
- Special and general educators advance their knowledge and skills by pursuing a program of continuing education including but not limited to participation in such activities as in-service training, professional conferences/workshops, professional meetings, continuing education courses, and the reading of professional literature.

[the recommendations above are from Quality Indicators....]

Other suggestions voiced by the committee:

- All learning, including the use of technology as a learning tool, should empower students to meet their future.
- Specific staff development on inclusive strategies, special education law and IEP team procedures should be provided to school staff so everyone is speaking the same language.
- Consider paid collaboration time outside of the workday for schools where scheduling cannot accommodate joint planning time.
- Appropriate team members are on the IEP and 504 teams to address the individual needs of specific students.

The attitude of the principal and other supporting personnel in the school can affect the success of an inclusion program.

- Principals and Assistant Principals need to be trained to manage and monitor the inclusion process.
- Principals and Assistant Principals need experience in an inclusion setting.
- Principals and Assistant Principals need to be aware of the inclusion setting when performing teacher observations. Specific criteria may be needed for observing teachers of inclusion classrooms to ensure IEPs are being followed.
- The attitude of other school personnel is also important. The Music, PE teachers, nurses, cafeteria workers and custodians should be aware of children with disabilities and their needs.
- Teachers that team with inclusion classrooms need to be educated about working with special needs students as well as the teacher responsible for the inclusion class.

- Families of children without disabilities also need to be educated about their children's programs and classes.

II. Collaborative Activities

- Obtain and record parental information about each child at the beginning of each year including learning style and specific likes and dislikes.
- Include Para educators in team meetings.
- Hold literature reviews and discussions related to classroom modifications and accommodations.

III. Staff Development Activities:

- Align critical curriculum with state/countywide indicators.
- Develop common language through the collaborative analysis of curriculum subsets.
- Determine the best use of assessments to improve reading/math instruction.
- Determine how to best integrate reading/math skills in the content areas.
- Provide training in best practice techniques for teachers and Para educators.

IV. Suggested school-wide strategies

1. Use a student weekly planner-
 - (a) Students have the planner with them at all times to record assignments.
 - (b) Teachers also carry a student planner to record the assignments and then transfer the information to a weekly planner poster.

V. Parents/Community

1. Goal-setting conferences early to get parents on board.
2. Weekly reading logs for home reading.
3. Public recognition for parents who return reading logs at a pre-set amount of the time.

Appendix: Sample High School Models

This information is provided by:
 Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction
 Special Education
 P O Box 47200
 Olympia, WA 98504-7200
 (360) 586-4804

2001 Update on OSPI Inclusive Learning Environments

Structure and Class Size:

The 250 Nathan Hale HS 9th graders are divided into two academies each staffed by six teachers, for a student-teacher ratio of approximately 20:1. Each teacher is a specialist in one or more of the following: science, health, language arts, social studies, special education, or ESL. Academic credit is granted for the first four subject areas. Each academy is divided into a health/science block and a humanities block, with approximately sixty students in each. Students complete coursework in a given block first quarter, then they work in the other block second quarter. This allows more curricular flexibility and more time to focus on specific subjects. The curricula in each block are developed to maximize integration (e.g., While a “health” class studies nutrition, the “science” class studies the chemistry of food.) Both blocks focus on reading and writing, essential skills for success.

Schedule:

The academies meet during the first three hours of each day. We developed a schedule that consists of two daily academic “periods,” ranging from 65 to 90 minutes, plus daily reading time. During the first quarter we schedule twenty minutes “all-academy” meetings on Mondays for announcements, team-building activities, and critical thinking skills (each with a weekly focus). Depending on the daily objectives, block one students might meet separately (e.g., 30 in history/LA during first period, then move to second period), work together in a single large group, or break into small groups of 15 to 20 students. A successful model has been to divide the sixty students between two teachers, with the third teacher acting as a “floater.” The floater works with students on an individual basis and offers immediate feedback or assistance with skills.

Expectations and Inclusion:

The academies operate on the inclusion principle; all students attend the same classes and meet high standards of behavior and academic achievement. Students capable of doing honors level work have the option of fulfilling requirements as specified in an honors contract. Students who are on IEPs have accommodations overseen and implemented by the appropriate specialist.

Summary:

The academy philosophy is the same as that which drives the school: to create an environment where all students achieve academic success. Key elements include:

- Personalization of learning, specifically, smaller student-teacher ratio and number of students seen by individual teachers, and focused use of mentorship time.
- Clear, consistent expectations and policies across the academies.
- Clear communication between school and home, facilitated by the mentorship teacher.
- Common collaboration time for daily staffing of students and integration of curriculum.

VI. The Nathan Hale High School 10th Grade Integrated Studies

The following model may change for the school year 2001-2002. The Nathan Hale tenth grade integrated studies blocks are the result of a multi-year, all-staff educational reform

process. They are a key part of a long-term goal to create a school, which meets its students' needs more fully than the traditional model.

Structure and Class Size:

The 250 Nathan Hale HS 10th graders are divided into integrated study blocks of 81 students, or approximately 27 students per class. A team of teachers for biology, history, and language arts will work with the students. Several of the teachers that worked in the ninth grade academy moved to the tenth grade integrated studies blocks. The curricula in each block are developed to maximize integration. Both blocks focus on reading and writing, essential skills for success. Students use logbooks to record daily assignments, activities, and reflections.

Schedule:

The Integrated Studies blocks meet during second, third, and fourth periods. Students take math and electives during first, fifth, and sixth periods. Students have break and lunch with the rest of the student body.

Expectations and Inclusion:

The academies operate on the inclusion principle; all students attend the same classes and meet high standards of behavior and academic achievement. An honors option is available to students who wish to undertake the challenge. Students choosing honors in all three subject areas: biology, history, language arts, will be required to show evidence of exemplary work over the course of the year, earn above 88% in all three subjects, attend three enrichment activities and complete 800 pages of outside reading per semester. Students who are on IEPs have accommodations overseen and implemented by the appropriate specialist.

WORK GROUP REPORT: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Members

Mike McIntyre

Mary Pace

Jay Silverman

Stacey Durkovic

Ron Boone

Tom Stengel

Peggy DeCrispino

Definition of Goal

For BCPS to have an effective well-communicated system to identify, generate and analyze student achievement data in order to improve instruction and services for special education students. We have generated several questions from this goal as follows:

1. What data constitutes an effective, well-communicated system of student achievement? What is currently available?
2. What format is that data offered in and is it communicated effectively? Who gets it? How is it offered in that format? To whom and how is it communicated to stakeholders? Is it done in a timely manner?
3. What does this data tell us? How will we recommend data be used to drive instructional improvement?

Best Practices/Strengths Identified

We looked at several data sources:

BCPS uses Test Trax and we found it to be user friendly. The user interface is good, but the data is thin. Test Trax can break data into 8 categories, although special education data, at this time, is not disaggregated to reveal needed information about this population. Test Trax is a good start; however, we are interested in more specificity within special education.

We also took a look at the **MSDE** data on their Website. It is very user friendly and informative. It allows you to look at data in different ways. You can also cross-reference more information. **Montgomery County** has the best website we've seen because the data is available by school, by system, and by 15 hours more or less of service (which is inclusion/self-contained special education). However, the site still did not give as much disaggregation as we are looking for.

Resources Consulted/Workgroup Meetings

On November 12, 2001, we met with Paul Mazza, Director of Standardized Tests and Student Data. We discussed how Montgomery County disaggregates student achievement data differently than BCPS. Mr. Mazza explained that Montgomery County currently employs 17 and BCPS only has 3 to do this task. Please refer to the attached meeting notes.

On December 10, 2001, we met with Brittany DeFelice, BCPS, at the Professional Development Center's computer lab. We looked at the BCPS Text Trax system and compared it to Montgomery County. Their data is disaggregated much more than ours is. We also learned how to access and use the MSDE Website for student achievement information. Please refer to the attached meeting notes.

On January 31, 2002, we met to determine what data we desired currently not available on Test Trax. We developed the first draft of the attached "Proposed Special Education Data Package."

On February 11, 2002, we met with Patrick Colohan, Facilitator, Computerized IEP, to look at data we desired from IEP's. Please refer to the attached meeting notes.

On February 25, 2002, we met again to outline the draft of our final report. Please refer to the attached meeting notes.

On March 11, 2002, we presented an overview of our report to the Citizens Advisory Committee.

In the next week, we will meet with Dr. Mark Moody, Division of Planning, Results and Information Management, MSDE, to share our proposed data request to see if it is pliable and how we might use it.

Workgroup Recommendations

We believe good assessment data about special education students is essential in order for schools to make appropriate instructional decisions to increase student achievement for this population. The data currently available does not accomplish this. It must be expanded to include determinable breakdowns of special education students. In order for this to be accomplished, we recommend the following:

1. That BCPS staff be designated to review the CACSE "Proposed Special Education Data Package" and respond to the Student Achievement work group regarding a format and process for the generation, analysis, and communication of such data.

2. That BCPS procure a web-based IEP format with the ability for additional data fields to be determined at a later date. This should include a determination if the student was with the Infants and Toddlers Program.
3. That the BCPS Website includes a user-friendly interactive page to allow users to access assessment data for special education programs.
4. BCPS consider a Special Education Report Card to be available on the school system Website and/or MSDE should include a separate section on the MSPP for special education.
5. That staffing be provided to allow for generation, formulation, analysis, and communication of the recommended data.

Attachments:

Proposed Special Education Data Package

Workgroup Meeting Minutes, 11/12/01, 12/10/01, 2/11/02, 2/25/02

12/20/01 Email Regarding Kindergarten Assessment

**PROPOSED SPECIAL EDUCATION DATA PACKAGE
CACSE/STAFF WORK GROUP ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN
SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Desired Data:

**Elementary
High**

- MSPAP – All tested areas,
Grade 3 and 5

- Attendance

- CTBS – All scores,
Grades 2 and 4

- MMSR – (WSSKDS)

-Extra Curricular Activities*

- MLO,IMAP, Undetermined

Middle

- MSPAP (All Areas)
Grade 8

- CTBS – All scores,
Grade 6

- Md. Functional tests
(All Areas, All Grades)

- Honor Roll**

- % Algebra and Pre-
Algebra by Grade 8

- Nat'l. Jr. Hon. Soc.

-PSAT/SAT
(Verbal,Math,Total)

-AP Results
(% 3,4, 5)

-% Algebra II
or higher

- Nat'l. Hon. Soc.

Drop-Out Rate

-U of MD
Requirements:

-Career & Tech.

-Rig. H.S.

Indicators

-Post –secondary
decisions

-% Certification/Diploma

-TAG

*Represents possible new IEP field ** For inclusion on Quarterly Report

Desired Data Groupings:

<u>Elementary</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>High</u>
I & T Pre-K Kind. Grades 1 to 5	Grades 6 –8	Grades 9 - 12

Desired IEP and Quarterly Report Fields:

- Hours of Service - 15 or less, all
15 or less, minus speech only IEP's
15 or more, all
- LEP – Yes/No
- Free and Reduced Lunch – Yes/No
- IMAP, Diploma Bound, Undetermined
- Ever enrolled in Infants and Toddlers – Yes/No
- Program Title
- Placement - Cluster or Home School

Desired Disaggregations:

Special Education by:

- Hours of Service - 15 or less, all
15 or less, minus speech only IEP's
15 or more, all
- LEP and Special Education -15 or less, all
15 or less, minus speech only IEP's
15 or more, all
- Free and Reduced Lunch and Special Education - 15 or less, all
15 or less, minus speech only IEP's
15 or more, all
- Mobility and Special Education - 15 or less, all
15 or less, minus speech only IEP's
15 or more, all
- All of the above by disability code by tested area
- IMAP by school and by system
- Standardized Assessments by Accommodations;
 - o Total with and by accommodation
 - o Total excused @ 0 score
 - o Total exempt and exempt by accommodation

From: Boone, Ronald P
To: Stengel, Thomas J
Cc:
Subject: FW: Kindergarten Assessment
Attachments:

Sent: Sun 12/23/2001 6:11 PM

Tom - Could you print about 10 copies of this out for our next data work session. Thanks!! Ron

-----Original Message-----

From: Myers, Clayton W
Sent: Thursday, December 20, 2001 8:16 AM
To: Boone, Ronald P
Cc: McMahan, Kathleen M
Subject: RE: Kindergarten Assessment

Ron

We have no instrument called the Kindergarten School Readiness Test and we use no county-wide readiness assessment tools like the Gates or the Metropolitan. MSDE does not recommend prekindergarten or kindergarten standardized testing instruments.

However, this year is the second year implementing MSDE's Maryland Model for School Readiness. As part of this program, we used the Work Sampling System Kindergarten Developmental Checklist to assess all entering kindergarten children on 30 basic items. This year all kindergarten teachers and special education teachers of 5-year-olds received training on the instrument and the process, and used it through the months of September and October. The instrument is an observation tool that requires teacher observation over an extended period of time. It covers seven domains of learning (personal/social, language, math, science, social studies, the arts, and physical development). It was completed in November and then forwarded to MSDE. All kindergarten-age children including special education children were screened (6600+). Note - last year, we only screened a random sampling of children in our schools and the results were too small to really use effectively.

The results of the checklist will be tabulated by a private contractor and reported by MSDE to the state board, the press, and the locals. This information is mandated by the legislature as a means of measuring kindergarten children's readiness for school. The intent is to discover how preschoolers are being prepared (or not prepared) by public prekindergarten programs, preschools, nursery schools, Head Start, child care, etc. in preparing them for kindergarten. It is not meant as a measure of individual progress and is not used for placement. I expect the results to be out sometime in January or February.

I have samples of the instrument if you or the committee are interested. I would also be willing to come speak to them to answer questions if desired.

Hope this answers your question.
Clay

-----Original Message-----

From: Boone, Ronald P
Sent: Wednesday, December 19, 2001 3:28 PM
To: Myers, Clayton W
Subject:

Clay - The Citizen's Advisory Committee for Special Education sub-committee on data would very much appreciate any information which you can provide regarding the following. Please email the response to me. Ron

How is the Kindergarten School Readiness Test administered and used?

WORK GROUP REPORT: COMMUNICATION

Membership

Karen Bowman

Barbara Cheswick

Jean Considine

Terry Darr

Marjean Funn

Jerry Lynskey

Paige Paipe

Linda Pierce

Mary Scott

1. **Topic** - The objective of the Communication Group is to explore methods of communication and collaboration between parents of students receiving special education services and the school system. The work group will review existing methods, identify areas of need, investigate new ideas and make recommendations that will strengthen the established partnership that currently exists between the two groups. The group will solicit input from both parents and school staff to offer a balanced perspective on what is needed to enhance this essential relationship.

2. **Best Practices/Strengths**
 - School calendar – published yearly
 - Resource Center for Families and Schools
 - Hand In Hand Newsletter
 - BCPS Website/Office of Special Education
 - Parent Resource Guide (in progress)
 - Special Education Resource Fair (held every other year)
 - Citizen’s Advisory Committee for Special Education

3. **Resources Consulted** –
 - CAC Communication Work Group Outline
 - Special Education website, webmaster/Heather Rasmussen-hrasmussen@bcps.org
 - Partnership 2000 Schools Manual, Improving School-Family-Community Connections
 - Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Parent Involvement

4. **Key Recommendations** –
 - A. Special Education Website revisions, which include:
 - include the words "special education" instead of just Federal and State Programs
 - add parent newsletter to Hand In Hand as further clarification

- Include MSDE parent support links
- Include FAQ, Common Vocabulary and Definitions
- Parent Support Link to get you to Parent Resource Center info.
- Remove Mission Statement from each subheading
- Consider template change
- Clean up each individual subheadings page to reflect changes (Heather will mail each contact a hard copy to review, edit, revise, and fax back changes)
- Best practices for parent involvement

B. County should provide packets for parents for IEP Team Meetings to include information from MSDE and MDLC publications , Special Edition, completed Resource guide along with a publication and distribution plan

C. Countywide sponsorship for annual speaker of national recognition on disability topics, i.e., Richard LaVoie, Thom Hartman, Patricia Quinn, Ross Green

D. Revise Parent Support Contact list as a document not part of the website revision

E. CAC should include parent communication on their agenda at least annually

F. Hand In Hand should be reviewed for purpose and distribution issues