

Education Subcommittee Meeting #1

Wednesday, August 29th, 2007

Jim Wrye, Chairman opened the meeting indicating Dr. Whetstone will try and come by in a bit to answer questions. He introduced himself to the group as the Director of Communication for the AEA and as a parent of a child diagnosed with autism. He has been involved in the lobby team of AEA, budget review committee, and has worked in public education most his life.

Big changes have happened recently with the re writing of the AL Administrative code, there are policy changes and he is looking forward to getting into that.

Melody Crane, Director of the Riley Center (Huntsville)
Heather French, Dir. Of Education at the Riley Center
Laura Klinger, UA Faculty Member in Psychology (Tuscaloosa)
Myriam Peralta UAB Developmental Pediatrician, AL Chapter of the AAP
Pam Black , support group leader ASA, parent of 8 year old (Albertville)
David Sisken, AL DMH/MR, supervisor comprehensive supports team – Mobile – Region 3 – here for Susan Ford (she is ill)
Jennifer Sellers – Interim coord. Auburn Autism Center
Lee Yount – Chair of systems of care
Laura Mallet, Autism Specialist, Huntsville City Schools
Tuwanna McGee – ADAP
Jennifer Muller, Autism Society of Alabama
Tammi Trawick, Autism Society of Alabama, parent
Nancy Barnes – Huntsville City Schools, Autism Specialist
Amanda Bellmeyer, BCBA – Behavioral Int. Consultants, Mobile
Candy Knickerbocker – founder of SEAC, Mobile

Jim Wrye's Remarks: Education is one of biggest pieces of puzzle on the task force For at least 2 months conversations have been had with spec ed coordinators, teachers, students coming in. No sense of people being on top of the situation. Dr. Whetstone reported this morning that they have increased the number of students with IEPs from 849 to 2300 (up 270%).... Things get overwhelmed quickly...

Growth of education trust fund – all sales tax goes here, etc.

Nancy Barnes – in an effort to describe the current state of affairs in education- She was in the classroom until last year. Feels like drowning now. 25 children who have enrolled, in Kindergarten, or referred from preschool. Every class, every teacher available has very high case load. She doesn't know how to help anybody any more. Lots not identified, labeled dev. delayed, labeled otherwise health impaired. Not quite sold on full inclusion – some need intense help, especially 5 year olds. Working with

head start – itinerant teachers, preschool teachers work part time, set up notebooks, take data – ECLIPSE type classes. One specialized program only with autism – intense discrete trial therapy. Do this for awhile, move them to preschool setting then to regular classes. Eleven elementary classes, with 8-10 in these classes. Some go out into inclusive class for varying degrees of time. If these kids go into certain schools, the regular ed teachers learn how to handle them – actually like them. Some included all day, each has 2/3 assistants.

Middle school – 2 classes of middle school students.

High school – 2 classes – life skill classes – 10 in each. One only with 9th and 10th graders. Autism crisis letter to special ed coordinator. Almost nonverbal Kindergarten class --- why is this child in my class.

Needs are definitely training. But then have a new influx of teachers. Teachers have to take time off on their own for training, no money. Materials – Laminators, film,

Paraprofessional training – credit for specialized training, again the turnover is an issue
College Credit for training like AMSTI program

David Siskin – paraprofessionals don't really have days available for training

Pam Black – teachers don't know what to do with it – her son is first one that they have come across in the school

Amanda -- Reg ed, spec ed, autism ed....all of these need training related to autism as it is an ever increasing group.

Dr. Whetstone –

Tremendous problem with acquiring spec ed teachers, para pro's, quality of para's needed. Para's should be able to instruct, work with the kids, have some level of understanding

Looking for all teachers to come up with behavioral management as a strong component of their education program. Now – exceptionality class – doesn't matter if know numbers, characteristics, etc. – need to know the behavior, what do we do with the behavior. Change in development of teacher candidates. Methods courses would be paired with a special education professor. Difficult to do this. Samford has a good collaborative education program. Students with spec ed belong in general ed classroom WITH supports, WITH pull outs when needed, but then returned to general ed class. Academically they cannot miss big chunks of instruction.

Nancy --- Kids still need life skills training, even if it is not in the required curriculum

Dr. Whetstone – Hard to decide what is more important, timing of needs for education vs. life functioning.

Nancy – the students she is seeing are having trouble surviving in community, some that even have college degrees

Dr. Klinger – sees many kids thru IEP meetings to get them into occupational diploma classes – CANT we figure out a way to mix those 2 diploma tracks for kids with HFA.

Whetstone – could establish elective for “Transition services” and give credit for that under either track .All diploma options had to be aligned (97) for no child left behind. AOD leading to community life and then to work. NCLB had to do away with functionality of most of the course work because it wasn’t aligned with grade level “social studies”/whatever.

Looking at revamping AOD – maybe giving a regular diploma with endorsement in AOD. There are not trade classes – career technical ed program – anymore.

Change from mindset of a “pullout” state to more of an inclusive state.

Amanda – need to have not an either/or situation – but more of a continuum. At a certain point, the child has to get its needs met.

Whetstone – Meet with all LEA’s. There is a continuum of services, no such thing as full inclusion for every child. There must be the ability to pull child out as needed. There must be intervention programs that are aligned with the core programs for that child. IE – timing during day – child can’t miss one thing for something else.

Wrye – identified common themes within the above discussion:
Silos, Occupational diplomas, Teachers/special ed coordinators being able to adjust IEP

Whetstone – National movement – Response to Intervention – Tiers

McGee – 3 major accommodations – HIGHLIGHTING, proximity seating, extended time on seating. Those are not the only accommodations that can/should be made. We need to help teachers understand this.

Knickerbocker – Guidance curriculum – not testing coordinators – if allowed to be guidance counselors – these kids could get a lot of social skills work
Second – Son in an interventions class, timing is off –

Whetstone – Intervention – enrichment at same time. Lots of theory but not a lot of help with scheduling and actual practice. To use special ed people and Title 1 people effectively.

Wrye – Asks the questions: How much short are they with the numbers??

Whetstone – for ex. Mobile needs 35 teachers – no people. Pay stipend for teachers while in college if they stay in AL for 2 years after graduate. Teacher salaries looked at. Stipend for AL teacher categories, Math, Science, Special Ed.

Wrye – parapro's what are we down by?... Look at it as a workforce issue.

Whetstone – it is the requirements placed by NCLB and the requirements for a degree.

Knickerbocker – You have to train janitor, bus driver, everyone that comes into contact with the child. You never know when a sensory thing will hit.

Amanda – IDEA – functional behavior assessment needed – currently in the state there are 43 people – and only 4 or 5 have degrees in special ed and BCBA certification. You have to integrate the special ed and psychology

Klinger – at UA, communicative disorders, special ed & psychology work very closely together

Black – Parental education. South Carolina Autism Society video – for \$30 – can get Identification. Parents need to call 911 and let them know that a child with autism lives there.

Whetstone – Bulk rate for it....

Klinger – Regional support centers for training, follow up consultation

Yount – Glenwood is just tip of iceberg – their handful of people are booked months ahead.

Whetstone – It will just take time – there are not the people that

Old SEAC – Now PTI – Needs to be involved in this – educating parents

Pam Black – parents are not aware of these things – teachers need to help pass to parents the information

Klinger – ACDD grant - - preschool education social skills for free at UA conference.

Wrye asked of Peralta – what would be the appropriate training for pediatricians. How to do developmental screenings – make that part of certification. The new ones will have more training. People who have been practicing for awhile ...

Amanda said Dr. Swingle in Mobile (USA) – new diagnostic clinic – he wants to have it be part of recertification.

Peralta – Board certified vs. Board Eligible. Renewing of licenses. State Board of

Medical Examiners. Bob Babcock would like to look at same thing for psychology certification.

Klinger – Be careful – if kids screen positive there is not the services of care to handle the full diagnostic assessment

McGee – Can we better utilize the guidance counselors – do not have them doing scheduling and testing

Knickerbocker – after NCLB, real decline in moral of teachers. General ed teachers do not want this type of environment.

Klinger – Feels the Huntsville model is a good move

Amanda Bellmeyer offers: Dr. Christine Reeves, Autism Consortium-Shelby County Model classroom in every school system – have a good trained classroom – then send other teachers to that classroom

Black – One of the biggest obstacles is that parents are told what their rights are – and what should be done for their children – but there are not the resources there to do these things. Then parents get very angry but nothing can be done.

Klinger – Many autism programs popping up – must have regional centers under a coordinated program. We need a model. Just take one and run with it.

Knickerbocker – What is the school system that has the parent liaison group that was trained in special education

Models from different states – need to specify which are from all the same University.

Hard to get ahold of what would be the central hub organization.

Muller – UAB is a center of excellence

Klinger – Needs assessment is an example of how things can come together.

Knickerbocker – Brought together USA folks to create a USAL autism consortium. They had never gotten together before...

Dr. Klinger will bring information about North Carolina model. CARD System in Florida – Nancy Barnes. Candy Knickerbocker volunteers Dr. Babcock to discuss Emory's system.

For next time – From Dr. Whetstone – who they will hire, criteria. From Jennifer – what are the resources – special ed coordinators, who are they, how many general ed teachers have kids with autism. Models – NC, FL.

Barnes – KY Technical assistance for autism for teachers manual. 2 PhD's put it together, is this something we could do. She recommends we all go look at it.

Systemic questions to get answered. Need to get them answered – systemically. Who is he hiring. Systemic issue – big decision about hiring someone. Could some side money be placed in there....

Occupational Diploma – We need to look at those life skills. It is not very different from getting a regular diploma. AOD is a curriculum issue.

Klinger/McGee –

Curriculum was not developed for kids with autism but you have to meet the requirements of NCLB. Counselors can help with curriculum. Transition classes are an idea. Electives are put in place that children with disabilities can learn social skills, organizational skills, etc. But THAT turns into study hall, etc.

Issues of Focus:

- (1) Teacher Training & Support/Retention/Recruitment – Preservice and Continuing Ed teachers
- (2) Curriculum – regular diploma – needs support services (dual exceptionality – gifted and autism). Then for more impaired kids – reading on 1st grade level in 7th grade class – how to handle.
- (3) Training Kits/Educators/Parents/First Responders
- (4) Addressing the behavioral supports the teachers need

AOD was for children with more serious disabilities. The hope after NCLB was that Alabama's graduation rate would increase with implementation of AOD.

Knickerbocker – During after school programs – could do study/social skills work.
Response – sounds expensive.

Next Meeting September 21st – 1pm
AEA Building, 422 Dexter Avenue