



STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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D.D. Council Quarterly Report
July 2009
Division of Special Populations

1. Leadership Groups

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) seeks ongoing input from both professionals and family members on issues related to the education of students with disabilities through the following leadership groups:

- Significant Disabilities Leadership Committee (contact nanette.olivier@la.gov)
- Mild/Moderate Leadership Committee (contact kristina.braud@la.gov)
- Leadership Development Committee for Sensorily Impaired (contact joyce.russo@la.gov or melodie.spears@la.gov)
- Autism State Team (contact robyn.hargrave@la.gov)

These groups generally meet on a quarterly basis and provide guidance and recommendations related to matters such as professional development needs, higher education issues, implementation of regulations, etc.

2. Preschool

The LDE's Preschool Special Education Section is supporting an effort for Special Education Early Childhood Coordinators and Part C Early Steps Coordinators to jointly create guidelines for their districts and regions to ensure a smooth transition from Part C to part B for children and their families. As a part of this effort, Kathy Whaley from NECTAC (National Early Childhood Assistance Center) and Grace Kelly from SERRC (Southeast Regional Resource Center) reviewed the regulations for Part B of 619 and Part C Early Steps. For further information on this project, contact Linda Champion at the LDE (Linda.champion@la.gov).

3. Monitoring

The IDEA Program Review Section is currently preparing for the 2009-2010 monitoring season. Summer trainings will be held for the monitoring team leaders and members, as well as Directors of Special Education of districts that will be monitored during the upcoming year. LDE staff members are also reviewing monitoring issues that may need to be addressed specific to students with low incidence disabilities (e.g., significant disabilities, blind/visually impaired, deaf/hard of hearing). For further information related to monitoring, contact Ellen Dunlap Spear (ellen.spears@la.gov) or Christie Hollins (christie.hollins@la.gov).

4. PRIORITIES Newsletter (Deaf/Hard of Hearing)

The purpose of the PRIORITIES Newsletter is to provide pertinent information about serving students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing in Louisiana. Each issue will provide ideas, resources, and information that can help in providing the best

services possible to maximize the learning capacity of students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. The newsletter is updated quarterly and can be downloaded from the following link:

- <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/eia/1036.html>
- Contact: Melodie Sparks, melodie. sparks@la.gov

5. Bulletin 1508 (Pupil Appraisal Handbook)

A user friendly version of the 2009 revised *Bulletin 1508* can be downloaded from the LDE's website (<http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/eia/1474.html>). Web-based trainings on the revisions of *Bulletin 1508* are also available at the site. For further information, contact: Nancy Hicks (nancy.hicks@la.gov).

6. Special Education Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Dr. George Ann Rice, a consultant with NASDSE (National Association of State Directors of Special Education) and former HR director of the Las Vegas County School System, is working with three school districts in Louisiana (East Baton Rouge, Natchitoches, and Rapides) to address ongoing and persistent problems in the area of recruitment and retention of special education personnel. A recruitment/retention symposium was held for regional teams (LDE representatives, HR directors, Special Education Directors, and IHE personnel) in June 2009. Dr. Rice presented her findings and recommendations for Louisiana. A follow-up meeting for this same group is scheduled for August 2009 to work on next steps. The results of this effort will be used to inform strategies for the state to improve special education teacher recruitment and retention.

7. Needs Assistance Determination

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services released state determinations on implementation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* for Part B and Part C for fiscal year 2007. Louisiana received a "Needs Intervention" determination for Part B. The Louisiana Department of Education is in the process of appealing this determination. Louisiana received a "Needs Assistance (two consecutive years)" determination for Part C.

The 2004 Amendments to the *IDEA* require each State to develop a State Performance Plan (SPP) that evaluates the State's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of the *IDEA*, and describes how the State will improve its implementation. The SPP includes baseline data, measurable and rigorous targets, and improvement activities for 20 indicators such as graduation rate, dropout rate, participation and performance on assessments, meeting evaluation timelines, and ensuring that complaints and hearings are resolved within required timelines.

The *IDEA* also requires each State to report annually to the Secretary on its performance under the SPP. Specifically, the State must report in its Annual

Performance Report, the progress it has made in meeting the measurable and rigorous targets established in its SPP. The secretary is required to issue annual determination letters to each state on their progress in meeting the requirements of the statute. The determinations are part of the ongoing efforts to improve education for America's 7 million children with disabilities.

Louisiana's State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Reports can be found at Louisiana's State Performance Plan can be found at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/eia/2115.html>

IDEA details four categories for the secretary's determination. The state:

- Meets the requirements and purposes of *IDEA*;
- Needs assistance in implementing the requirements of *IDEA*;
- Needs intervention in implementing the requirements of *IDEA*; or
- Needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of *IDEA*.

Data and criteria used to make determinations:

IDEA identifies specific technical assistance or enforcement actions aligned with each of the determinations, with the exception of "meets requirements," that the Department must take under specific circumstances. If a state "needs assistance" for two consecutive years, the Department must take one or more enforcement actions, including among others, requiring the state to receive technical assistance, designating the state as a high-risk grantee, or directing the use of state set-aside funds to the area(s) where the state needs assistance. If a state "needs intervention" for three consecutive years, the Department must require a corrective action plan or compliance agreement, or withhold further payments to the state. Any time a state "needs substantial intervention" the Department must take immediate enforcement action, such as withholding funds or referring the matter to the Department's inspector general or to the Department of Justice.

8. Organizational Changes

There have been organizational changes at the LDE. Susan Batson is now the Acting Director of the Division of Special Populations, and the majority of personnel working in the area of special education are in this Division.

9. Navigation the LDE's Website

- Home page: www.louisianaschools.net
- Information specific to special education:
<http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/eia/home.html>
- Reports related to the status and progress of the state and local districts in serving students with disabilities
<http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/eia/2115.html>