South Carolina Advisory Council

For Educating Students with Disabilities

Annual Report 2019-20

Dear Superintendent Molly Spearman and the South Carolina State Board of Education:

On behalf of the South Carolina Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities (ACESD), I am pleased to submit this report summarizing the ACESD activities and accomplishments from July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020.

The past year has been another exceptional opportunity for collaboration between the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), Office of Special Education Services (OSES) and the ACESD. Membership of the ACESD includes: parents of students with disabilities, individuals with disabilities, K–12 general and special educators, school district administrators, advocates, representatives of nonprofit organizations, representatives of higher education, and governmental service providers throughout the state.

The majority of the work of the ACESD is done by five committees: Executive; Transition and Self Advocacy; Safe Schools; Professional Development; and Preschool. Every ACESD member participates in at least one committee.

The full ACESD meets four times a year and is open to the public. We encourage anyone with an interest in special education to attend and present their concerns and suggestions for improving opportunities for students with disabilities.

The ACESD appreciates the support, information, and guidance provided by the SCDE and OSES as we strive together to make a free and appropriate public education a reality for all students in South Carolina. A special note of thanks goes to Rebecca C. Davis, Director of the OSES, Lannette Cox, OSES' ACESD Liaison, and Gwen Gladden, OSES Administrative Assistant for their continuous commitment to the operation of the ACESD.

Sincerely,

Jane McMillan, Chair
South Carolina Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities

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I. Advisory Council Mandate

In accordance with Section 300.167–300.169 of the final regulations of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004* (IDEA '04) each state is required to establish and maintain an advisory council for the purpose of providing guidance with respect to special education and related services for students with disabilities. The South Carolina Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities (ACESD) works in collaboration with the Office of Special Education Services of the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE).

II. Vision

The Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities (ACESD) envisions a world where all students are respected and challenged, where the needs of all students are met, and where the aspirations for success of all students are fulfilled.

III. Mission

The Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities (ACESD) mission is to make recommendations that impact decisions made on behalf of students with disabilities to enhance the quality of educational services they receive and to enable them to reach their individual potential.

IV. Advisory Council Membership

The members are selected on the basis of their knowledge of, or experience in, the education of students with disabilities. Members are broadly representative of South Carolina's population in regard to developmental, physical and mental disabilities, race, ethnic background, gender, and geographic location. Representation of the Council is established by statute to include parents of students with disabilities, individuals with disabilities, general and special educator's K–12, school district administrators, advocates, representatives of higher education, and governmental service providers. The majority of members must be parents or individuals with disabilities.

A formal application process is used by the Executive Committee to provide recommendations for appointment by the Superintendent of Education. New members are appointed in July of each year and serve for a three year period.

V. Public Participation

All ACESD meetings and agenda items are announced in advance of each meeting to afford interested parties a reasonable opportunity to attend. A public comment period is provided at each meeting. The ACESD takes all testimony under advisement and forwards comments to committees, agencies or departments as appropriate.

VI. Public Comments

Opportunities for public input into the activities of the ACESD are important. Individuals, groups, or organizations may address the ACESD in the following ways:

In person: During the Public Comment period outlined in the agenda

In writing: Public comment may be submitted electronically or through the US Mail addressed to the ACESD liaison at the OSES or the Chairperson of the ACESD.

By phone: Individuals who can't be physically present may call in on a toll-free teleconference line during the comment period if requested at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

During the 2019-2020 year, public comments received were related to the following topics:

During this unique year, we received two public comments. The first, sent to our OSES Liaison Lannette Cox, was especially disturbing. The parent had a child struggling with speech delay and a learning disorder. The child received a concussion in school because he continued, uninterrupted, to hit his head against a cement wall until he received the concussion. Apparently, there were 4 teachers and 12 other students in the class while this occurred. No one stopped him. There is no defined time period for this; rather the teachers stated "at least 30 minutes" and that he hit his head "at least 45 times". One teacher stated to the parent that she "placed her hand between his head and the wall until her hand began to hurt, and then she removed her hand, doing nothing else. The parent also reported that after she discussed the event with other parents, she discovered that at least 2 other students in this self-contained, special needs classroom had incurred injuries without explanation or formal report. The parent pleaded for cameras to be placed in special needs classrooms to protect the children there.

The second public comment was from a parent who had two siblings old enough for public school. The older child was moving into 2nd grade, has special needs and had been going to the school since the age of 3. When the younger child became old enough to go to school, a "lottery" system would not allow the sibling to also attend the same school as the older child. The older child required personal attention to walk to his classroom, and thus, this would not be possible if the other sibling is to get to their school promptly. The parent asked for an exception to be made with the kindergartener allowing the child to attend her brother's school also.

VII. Committees

The **Executive Committee** directs the business of the ACESD to include developing meeting agendas, overseeing the nomination process, setting the calendar, reviewing the by-laws and policies, and developing the annual report. This committee also represents the ACESD in a variety of state-level activities.

The **Transition and Self Advocacy Committee** works to research and identify the unmet transition services needs of students with disabilities and to disseminate information about successful transition programs and services.

The **Safe Schools and Mental Health Committee** collaborates with state and local agencies that provide services to students, families, and schools in the area of mental health, bullying prevention, and seclusion/restraints.

The **Professional Development Committee** collaborates with the SCDE and higher education to improve and expand the delivery of information regarding special education issues, legal issues, and best practices to all teachers, administrators and general public.

The **Preschool Committee** works to improve the identification of preschool age children with special needs, improve access to inclusive practices and programs, and ensure the prompt delivery of services.

VIII. Communications of the Council

To encourage the participation of all members in the ACESD's activities, and to keep the public informed and involved in identifying the unmet needs of students with disabilities, a variety of means of communicating and disseminating information is used.

This year, the ACESD updated the web page at the SCDE, OSES's website, to increase the presence of the Council. The ACESD has updated its web page to inform the public of the ACESD's responsibilities and roles. The ACESD utilized conference calls and e-mails to conduct business, review information, receive updates from the OSES, and expedite decision-making.

The ACESD prepared the Annual Report for submission to the Superintendent of Education to formally inform the SCDE of the unmet needs of students with disabilities and to make recommendations for addressing those needs.

The ACESD recorded and maintained minutes of each meeting of the ACESD and its committees. The minutes are available to the public online on the ACESD page on the SCDE website.

IX. Activities and Accomplishments

During the period covered by this report, ACESD members participated in the following activities:

Conducted two meetings (with one meeting postponed due to weather, and then in early March we were shut down by Covid-19) to carry out the work of the Council;

Received information from the OSES concerning the State Performance Plan (SPP), the Annual Performance Report (APR), The State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and provided comments;

X. Recommendations

The year 2019-2020 is unusual, at best. Life itself proves to be a challenge. Covid 19 is affecting schools, businesses, and individuals alike. This committee is struggling to meet in person, and has not been able to meet for two out of four Full Council meetings scheduled because of weather and the pandemic. The committees have been unable to complete objectives in each committee with the reduced ability to meet in person. Plans are to resume these objectives in the 2020/2021 year, meeting virtually, due to health/safety concerns.

The Chairperson (Jane McMillan) and several members of the Executive Committee (Amanda Hess, Amy Holbert, and Kimberly Tissot) have been asked to be involved in the Parent Stakeholders Group by the OSES Director (Rebecca Davis) starting in April 2020, on a weekly basis. This stakeholder group is

developing methods of communicating with parents and students concerning Covid 19 effects on the school system.

Due to these challenges, the focus has been on honing methods of virtual communication. There were no formal recommendations for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Executive Committee

- Conducted three executive meetings to set calendar/agendas, made recommendations for membership, and performed oversight of the activities of the ACESD;
- There was no fourth meeting held due to Covid restrictions.

Safe Schools Committee

Priority 1: Review statewide threat assessment portal link and provide feedback. Potential train the trainer model. 2) Track progress and make recommendations around functional behavior assessment: modules, training, and input. Safe Schools has new members and a full committee this year. New members will be reviewing the legislation. 3) Track significant legislation: will meet on pre-filed bills during January Meeting. 4) MTSS and social emotional needs as implementing PBIS: Behavior Alliance of SC looking on a pilot program with seven schools in the state. Will review their materials, etc. 5) Ways to impact SRO knowledge and training. Goals to survey needs and continue training, and working with the SC Criminal Justice Academy to provide training and form a partnership. Some districts are using private security officers in place of SROs. Will inquire about training for these individuals.

Transition and Self-Advocacy and Professional Development Committees

Both committees welcomed new and returning members and recapped last reporting year's activities. During this reporting year, only two Full Council meetings were held (due to the COVID-19 public health emergency). The Transition and Self-Advocacy and the Professional Development committees decided to meet jointly during both of these meetings because of common goals and concerns, and in order to continue the discussion on special education certifications in South Carolina. Background was provided for members that weren't present at the last meeting and for new members. Our discussions focused on the planned surveys to gather information for the Committees to review for the likely recommendation to OSES that it create a task force to review current special education certifications in South Carolina.

The Committee members discussed whether to send one or multiple surveys, where the surveys should be sent, and the focus of the surveys. The Committees decided multiple surveys should be sent in order to tailor questions to the particular audience. The Committees decided surveys will be sent to: Certified special education teachers, Special education director/coordinators, and Public School Building Administrators.

The Committees reviewed the draft questions of an initially developed survey, edited items, created additional surveys, and made comments/suggestions. Each of the surveys were finalized according to discussions in the meeting and sent to the Committee members for review via email and for further discussion and development in subsequent meetings as needed.

- The committees consulted with the DOE's Educator Effectiveness & Leadership Development Department to learn what options are currently available and possible options to improve the current structure.

- The committees also consulted with OSES representatives to learn about and review a document, "Required Credentials for Professional Staff Members in the Instructional Programs of South Carolina's Public Schools."

- The joint TSA/PD committees asked OSES to send a request to the DOE's Educator Effectiveness & Leadership Development Department to have a representative attend the next joint meeting to discuss the "Required Credentials for Professional Staff Members in the Instructional Programs of South Carolina's Public Schools."

- The joint TSA/PD committees also asked OSES to send a request to the DOE's Educator Effectiveness & Leadership Development Department to have a representative attend the next meeting to discuss information provided regarding research the DOE's team had gathered and provided the Committees on special education certification in other states and the surveys conducted by NASDTEC on special education certification.
- From this multitude of sources and information, including survey responses upon sending, the joint TSA/PD committees will develop a position paper to recommend a task force.

Preschool Committee

The full Preschool Report to the General Assembly is available on the Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities' website, which is housed within the Office of Special Education Services' site. **(See Appendix E)**

During the two meetings that occurred this year, the committee reviewed and provided feedback about:

- New memo from OSES on the Preschool Continuum of Placement
- Community resources in development and ready for launch
- Support for 619 coordinators
- Assistive Technology survey from the 619 coordinator

Appendix A

2019 – 2020 Full Council Meeting Calendar
South Carolina Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities

All meetings will be held at the P Charles LaRosa, Jr Human Resource Development Center, Vocational Rehabilitation, 1410 Boston Avenue, West Columbia, SC 29170

September 13, 2019
November 15, 2019
~~February 21, 2020~~ cancelled due to weather conditions
~~March 27, 2020~~ cancelled due to COVID19 restrictions

Appendix B

The agenda for each ACESD meeting is shared with each member 24 hours prior to the meeting. You may find the agendas by following this link.

Appendix C

The ACESD secretary records minutes during each full council meeting. Those minutes are reviewed at the beginning of the following meeting, in which any corrections may be made as suggested by the body. The ACESD then votes to approve the minutes or hold for further review. The minutes are found here.

Appendix D

Membership listing 2019-2020

Alisa Bentley
Amanda Campbell
Amanda Hess
Amy Holbert
Benjamin Miedema
Cara Senterfeit
Cathy Kovacs
Cherolyn Allen
Emily Beasley
Emily Paul
Heather Smith Googe
Hollis Gunn
Jane McMillan
Janet Robinson
Jay Collins
Jean Brooks
Jennifer Buster
Joyce Kimrey
Karma Marshall
Kelly Birmingham
Kerri Kannengieser
Kimberly Dunn Addis
Kimberly Perry
Kimberly Tissot
Laura Spears
Laura Vazquez
Lilli Rogers-Brown
Linda Mirabal-Pace
Louise Johnson
Marianne Koehl
Mary Lynne Diggs
Meghan Trowbridge
Melina Lee
Melissa Latham
Michelle Murphy
Michelle Myer
Monica Tudder
Nina Spinelli
Robin Frierson
Sarah Sharpe
Sherry Williams
Susan Beck
Tia Fletcher
Valarie Bishop

Appendix E

The preschool committee of the Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities (ACESD) is charged with the responsibility of identifying and studying key issues in special education and early intervention, advising and assisting the Office of Special Education Services of the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). The 2019 Annual Report and resulting recommendations are pursuant to Act 86 of 1993, Chapter 36 of Title 59 of the Amended Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976.

See full preschool report