



TULARE COUNTY COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

MINUTES

The Tulare County Community Advisory Committee for Special Education met December 1, 2011
in the Board Room of the Tulare County Office of Education, 2637 West Burrel at 12:00 Noon

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim Perrotta, Connie Acevedo, Gary Kenny, Amy McMahon, Stephanie Caldera, Randi Kestner, Blanca Florez, Cyndi Ward, Michelle West-Dyer

MEMBERS ABSENT: Filomena Rocha, Dana Collins, Tiffany Stark, Claudia Garcia,

OTHERS PRESENT: Norma Erwin, Lori Collins, Miroslava Esparza, Parent Liaisons / Tulare County Office of Education; Sapra Khalil, Kieria Hicks / members of the public.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: Tim Perrotta, Chair called the meeting to order. The CAC and members of the public introduced themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no comments made from members of the public present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 3, 2011 was made by Stephanie Caldera and seconded by Cyndi Ward. The minutes were approved by majority vote. The minutes stand.

REPORTS:

A. Presentation of CAC Calendar & Website – Norma Erwin

Norma presented the members with a copy of the 2012 CAC “Meeting Challenges” Calendar. Norma thanked Amy McMahon, Melanie Brainerd and Lori Collins for getting over 5,000 calendars distributed to schools, programs, hospitals, clinics and other community groups. CAC members, Blanca Flores and Amy McMahon will present the calendar to the county board of education on December seventh. The members were pleased with the calendar. Members also received a print out copy of the updated CAC web page. Norma highlighted the changes made and informed the members that this completes the goal proposed by the committee last year which was “a) to promote regular school attendance in the CAC calendar perhaps by way of a “Parent Tip” for each month and b) include a parent link on the CAC web page to promote regular school attendance and other helpful “Parent Tips.”

B. Report of October & November DOSE Meeting – Michelle West-Dyer

Michelle reported on the previous DOSE meetings:

- Norma presented the Child Find campaign and it was approved by DOSE.
- A new referral form for referring students to Severely Handicapped and Deaf/Hard of Hearing

- Programs was introduced. This would make the process of referring students more uniform.
- The CVRC Ad Hoc Committee: CVRC case workers will attend IEP meetings for high school students transitioning to ensure coordination between the two agencies.
 - The Carolyn Dobbs Special Education Teacher /Leader of the Year Award was introduced.
 - The Ad Hoc Forms committee members reviewed the new Mental Health Form to be used and services to be provided by TCOE.
 - Scott Aldrich provided speech and language staff development opportunities for district staff and recommended procedures for evaluating caseloads. Michelle said this will reduce the time kids are missing from class and allow them to benefit from the social experience.
 - Kaye van Gilluwe presented the SELPA Student Disability Summary for Tulare County and reviewed how they compare to state norms.
 - Data Wizard, a new online transition program was discussed. It is a career path program that helps students with resumes and letters. Students can also use it after graduating.
 - Kaye van Gilluwe led a discussion on some new educational programs being advertised in the local newspaper. After a review of the programs by the directors, it was decided that the programs did not demonstrate the research or evidenced based requirement needed for district support.

C. Review of Proposed Changes to the TCOE SELPA Plan – Norma Erwin

Norma Erwin reviewed the proposed changes to the TCOE / District SELPA: Section III, Governance and Administration of the Local Plan: C. Administrative Functions- Page 14

SELPA Administrator Selection and responsibilities {EC56170 (c) (1) and (2), 56200, 56780; 56205 (a) (12) (D) (ii) (I)}: The CAC reviewed and acknowledged the proposed changes.

D. Study Topic: “Clarification on inclusion aides; services to children with behavioral issues as opposed to higher functioning children.” In discussing inclusion aides, Joyce Nunes, Director of Special Services, Tulare City Schools prefaced her discussion by stating that it depends on the student and what will help that student succeed. In her district, aides are called classroom support providers (CSP). Joyce Nunes said there are a few concerns that need to be addressed and questions answered in any inclusion scenario such as; a) the effect of minimal or no teacher engagement verses the academic instruction being the responsibility of the teacher, b) separation from classmates which may result in the LRE no longer being the LRE due to the student being in the corner with an aide, c) a loss of gender identity because there is often an opposite gender match, d) would having an CSP only provoke problem behavior? Joyce explained that having a classroom support provider assigned to a classroom requires teacher involvement as oppose to being “glued to the hip” of the CSP. However, if the student is two or three grade levels behind then it is difficult to scaffold and provide support.

Another area of consideration is the parent’s hopes and desires. Sometimes parents want a 1:1 aide and the director of special education has not heard from the teacher or principal regarding the need. Joyce cautioned about the student falling into a state of “learned helplessness”. It is important to listen to both parents and teachers in order to navigate what is working and what is not. Joyce commented that sometimes a student must be allowed to fail in order to learn how to balance their responses. Strategies such as positive reinforcement may be needed in order to correct the situation. Joyce summarized that an individual assessment of student needs, helps to keep the focus on the student and how to best meet those needs while balancing the negatives and moving that student toward greater independence.

Committee member, Randi Kestner said her son has had an aide since first grade and shared the following lessons learned over the years from a parent perspective:

- “We learned that if the child does not like the aide, most of the time is spent fighting with the aide instead of learning.”
- “It is a frustrating situation for the teacher, aide and the child.”
- “I like the wording of classroom support person (CSP) as oppose to aide because it helps to

- prevent the child from becoming possessive of the aide.”
- “It was a much better arrangement when the student and aide agreed to have the aide step back if the student is following the rules.”
- “Having an aide is not an easy process. My student was embarrassed by the need for an aide and had to work through it.”
- “Constant contact with the aide was important to the parent because they were often more familiar with the situation than the teacher.”
- “Over all, it was a trial and error process of how to best utilize the aide. The biggest frustration was when a call came in regarding assaultive behavior and I had to ask where the aide was.”

Michelle West-Dyer commented that it is not always appropriate to limit teacher communication because it leaves the teacher out of the loop making them no longer responsible. It can also lead to inappropriate boundaries. It may work for some but not others. She said in her district, aides are assigned to provide classroom support in order to allow the student to work on independence.

Randi Kestner commented, “A well balanced inclusion aide is paying attention to everybody not just my student.” She shared the ultimate goal was independent functioning by senior year. She said, “It is not bad if he needs it and is getting it. It is bad if it is being provided and does not need it.”

E. New Project Idea Reports:

- 1) Child Find: Norma explained the brief Child Find presentations to targeted community groups.
- 2) CVRC/TCOE Transition Conference: Amy McMahon reported that a CAC booth would be possible and a table would be provided
- 3) COS Disability Event: More information will be available at the next meeting.
- 4) City of Visalia Event: Blanca Flores shared her involvement with previous sensitivity awareness activities hosted by Kaweah Delta Hospital. More information will be available at next meeting.
- 5) Sensory Friendly Film: Norma reported that the Autism Society has been contacted and hopefully more information will be available at the next meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Next meeting: Norma Erwin asked the CAC for a decision on whether to meet in January. Tim Perrotta asked how many members would be available to meet on January 12, 2012. It was the consensus of the committee to go ahead and meet and that a quorum could be met.

A motion was made by Cyndi Ward to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Blanca Florez. Meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.