

Tulare County
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
For Special Education

MINUTES
March 9, 2010

The Tulare County Community Advisory Committee for Special Education met in the Manzanita Room at the Doe Avenue Complex located at Tulare County Office of Education, 7000 Doe Avenue, Visalia, CA at 1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Claudia Garcia, Connie Acevedo, Gary Kenny, Ramon Cervantes, Shelley Dever, Stephanie Caldera, Tim Perrotta, Filomena Rocha

MEMBERS ABSENT: Aimee Miculian, Amy McMahon, Dana Collins, Tiffany Stark, Randi Kestner

OTHERS PRESENT: Brenda Beatty, Renae Bendix, Norma Erwin; Parent Liaisons / Tulare County Office of Education, Glen Stewart; Community Member, Cindy Ward; Parent, Marilyn Rankin; Assistant Superintendent Special Services

WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS: Tim Perrotta welcomed the Community Advisory Committee and members of the public. Introductions were made.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Chairman, Tim Perrotta requested a move to approve the February minutes. It was moved by Filomena Rocha and seconded by Shelly Dever. The motion was unanimously carried.

D.O.S.E. REPORT: The Committee tabled the March DOSE report until the next meeting when Aimee Miculian could be present.

APRIL CAC MEETING/ FIELD TRIP: CAC members discussed the need to change the date of the next meeting because schools will not be in session due to spring break. The members approved to move the next CAC meeting to April 8, 2010.

STUDY TOPIC: “FUNDING & BUDGET CUTS – DOING MORE WITH LESS”:
Dr. Marilyn Rankin opened the presentation by stating that special education funding is substantial and has increased. Dr. Rankin stated that Tulare County has a history of being able to meet needs of special education students and that “doing more with less” is about how to organize resources, implement programs and distribute the funding in a manner that encourages best practices. Dr. Rankin informed the CAC that Tulare County SELPA Governance Committee is composed of fifteen superintendents and all support funding programs for the severe handicapping conditions first and then distributing the remaining funding to districts based on the number of students in the district. The districts serve students with mild handicapping conditions with their district’s share of the special education money. She said there are forty six districts in Tulare County and 18 of the 46 provide their own special education programs for students with mildly handicapping conditions.

Dr. Rankin used a pie chart to show how the funding was distributed for 2008 - 2009 and said the funding is based on ADA. She also used a bar illustration to show the distribution of funds comparing the amount of funding for the districts, (servicing the mildly handicapped) and the amount of funding for Tulare County Office of Education (serving the severely handicapped).

Dr. Rankin stated that in the past special education programs often became recipients of students who failed in general education. These were students deemed to have mild handicaps in reading or Speech and Language. She said districts are now using Response to Intervention as a way to strategically target materials and interventions to provide for those students. Districts using the RtI approach require all students to be tested for progress in reading at regular intervals. Students showing lack of progress are given more intensive service and remediation within the classroom. These interventions and careful progress monitoring by the general education teachers greatly reduces the need or desire to refer such students to special education.

Dr. Rankin said the SELPA is also able to stretch dollars by using a common sense approach to providing service. Particular areas of cost savings are practices regarding travel of staff, not having staff go from school to school each day but rather home basing staff at least for a full day of service.

Dr. Rankin cited other areas such as physical therapy and occupational therapy and the need to identify whether it is an educational or a medical necessity. If it is an educational need then the physical therapist and occupational therapists should support the classroom teacher in providing opportunities for skill building throughout the students' day. If therapy is a medical necessity then CCS is responsible for the service.

Member, Shelly Dever commented that balance is needed between the rights of special education and the rights of regular education students. Community member, Glen Stewart asked for clarification on whether special education or regular education had suffered cut backs and whether it was state funding. Dr. Rankin stated that special education budgets were not cut to the extent that general education was cut. Glen Stewart commented that a lot seems to be put on the regular education teacher and wondered if some might fall through the cracks.

The CAC members debriefed the topic afterwards. Stephanie Caldera asked how you work with parents who do not want to wait for services. Shelly Dever offered that it is important to direct them up the chain of command to someone who can provide a clear explanation. Cindy Ward commented that she agreed with the common sense approach and that the parent school communication is vital to determine the true needs of the student to avoid money being spent needlessly. Filomena Rocha commented that it is a balancing act because her son receives occupational therapy at school and some students do need the one on one support but she would not want the school purchasing an expensive accommodation that her son might not need.

PARENT PANEL REPORT: COS EXCEPTIONAL CHILD CLASS: Brenda Beatty reported on the committee's "activity on behalf of individuals with exceptional needs." [EC 56194 (e)] Brenda Beatty and CAC members Stephanie Caldera and Filomena Rocha participated in a parent panel at COS.

Brenda Beatty reported that the participants on the Parent Panel discussed their child who has a disability. They shared their child's name, age, and school the child attended. The parent of an adult with disabilities discussed her child's passage through the Tulare Co. school system and current activities she is involved in. There was information given on each specific disability, how the child adapted to the disability and any orthotics, etc. that the child used in their daily lives. The panel also discussed what it was like to be told their child had a disability, how they manage

situations when other children tease their child, hopes and plans for the future and what a typical day looks like in their family. The panel talked about working with schools during the process of writing their child's IEP, the need to sometimes educate school staff about a specific disability and how siblings of the child adapt to a brother or sister with a disability. Chairman, Tim Perrotta thanked Brenda Beatty for her report.

ANNUAL LUNCHEON UPDATES: Renae Bendix outlined the possible entertainment options under review such as a dance performer from a county class, a group song from a CBI class, a student with Downs who plays drums and a student with a visual impairment who plays the keyboard. Renae Bendix reported that progress is being made to determine which students will be available to perform and stated a final report will be available next month. Renae also presented the members with a sample rolling power point that will be set to music and played during the luncheon. Chairman, Tim Perrotta thanked Renae Bendix for the update.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Claudia Garcia announced the "Impact Spring Symposium" would hold a Deaf Education Conference April 10, 2010 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Exceptional Parents Unlimited in Fresno.
2. Renae Bendix announced the "Transition to Adulthood" conference is March 17, from 6 – 8 p.m. at CVRC. The event targets 18 – 22 year olds and vendors will be available to present service and resource options.
3. Filomena Rocha announced that the Diagnostic Center will present a workshop on "Social Skills" for children with special needs on March 11 at 5:30 at the Tulare City Schools District Office.
4. Shelly Dever announced a Special Needs Support Group for parents meeting the first Wednesday of each month and passed out flyers to those interested.
5. Next Meeting: April 8, 2010 at Parenting Network, 1900 N. Dinuba Blvd. Ste. C

Meeting Adjourned: 2:50 p.m.