

IDEA Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 3rd, 2010
Interactive Video Conferencing System

IDEA Members Present: Ed Boger, Tana Houser, Deb Balsdon, Tyler Hanson, Debra Huber, Robbin Hendrickson, Rita Weisz, Tara Bitz, Anthony Arnold, Cathy Haarstad, Katherine Terras, Cindy Lund, Barb Swegarden, Kyle Edgerton

ND Department of Public Instruction Staff: Alison Dollar, Kathy Smith, Lois Myran,

Bob Rutten is still out of the office due to an illness but will be transitioning back to work in the coming weeks. Alison Dollar added an additional agenda item to today's meeting - "Transition Survey (Indicator 14)".

ND MILE Project

Lois Myran gave a presentation on the NDMILE project. The NDMILE is a new online tool for assisting schools in improving their schools. It uses researched indicators to assist in planning for effective instruction and helps to simplify the reporting process that schools need to submit to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI). The project encompasses all units in the NDDPI. Currently forty-two schools have been invited to launch the project. Of those, ten have committed already with many more commitments expected. Because it is funded through a federal grant there is no cost to the schools. The tool allows schools to assess and decide what indicators are priorities. An indicator is defined as a gauge for assessing progress toward the destination. The NDMILE shows a school where they are relative to their priorities or indicators. Each state, district or school's specifics will vary according to individual needs. Ultimately the NDMILE project will help schools improve student learning although it's not what the electronic tool does but the process that improves school performance. Schools will need to be the leader in this initiative. Lois gave a brief demonstration of the online tool. Schools start by entering their data and rating each indicator as a high, medium or low priority. They then start the planning process to meet those indicators. If a school would like more information about a particular indicator they can click on a "wise ways" link which provides one to two pages of research on that indicator as well as links to additional research. Tyler Hanson asked Lois where she sees the project in two to five years from now. Lois commented that it is a sustainable process and it not meant to be short term in nature. If schools reach their priority indicators there are many more indicators to focus on. Tara Bitz reminded the committee that Title I requires program improvement reports so there will be a continued need for the project. Tyler Hanson suggested that special education units do the needs assessment and develop plans through the unit's perspective rather than a school perspective. Lois commented that there were some special education directors at the initial meeting and they had talked about using it from a unit perspective.

Educational Needs of Children with Brain Injury

Rebecca Quinn is the director of the ND Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Partnership. Rebecca gave the committee a brief background of why this job connects to her so much on a personal level. Rebecca herself sustained a brain injury at school when she was young. At the time it was completely forgotten about despite the fact that she started suffering from functionality problems, irritability, lack of attention span, etc. She was eventually diagnosed with a non specified learning disability but it was not attributed to her brain injury. Rebecca did attend college but ended up dropping out and eventually came to the job she is in today. Now looking back she can see and pinpoint where the system failed. Rebecca didn't receive the proper services had her brain injury been diagnosed and been dealt with properly. The leading cause of death and disability for children and teens is a traumatic brain injury. About one million children annually sustain injuries although only one-sixth of them are actually admitted to a hospital. Motor vehicle accidents and falls are the biggest causes. But not all brain injuries are the same. Rebecca points out that it is often the moderate brain injuries that the system fails most by not properly diagnosing. Child who sustain TBIs have to "grow with the injury." For example, they often recover very quickly but if the part of the brain that is damaged isn't utilized at age 5 when they are injured, the disability might not show up until later in life. At a later age, the child may not be able to keep up with their peers. Since TBI is not looked for on assessments it tends to mask as other disabilities. Many times children do well on assessments but have problems functioning in class which sometimes just attributed to lack of motivation. The level of functioning after a brain injury depends on age at the time of injury, severity of injury, type and location of injury, family support and treatment received and child's pre-injury experiences. Memory, reduced flexibility of thinking, impulsivity, depression, mood swings, inability to prioritize and agitation or aggression are all possible consequences of a TBI. Rebecca stressed how important it is to be familiar with the signs so children aren't misdiagnosed. Tyler asked how if most TBIs are diagnosed by the medical field or education field. Rebecca thought those diagnoses came from the medical field.

Language Change Letter to OSEP

Cathy Haarstad served on the Evolving Disability Terminology subcommittee. The subcommittee was charged with reviewing the usage of the terms "mental retardation" and "autism." As a result of that subcommittee, Cathy was charged with drafting a letter to OSEP expressing the IDEA Advisory Committee's concern over the term "mental retardation" with a recommendation that "intellectual disability" be used in its place. The letter was previously emailed to the committee members. Cathy asked if any members have any revisions they would like to make. Alison Dollar suggested adding some bullets to the five main points. Alison will check to see who specifically at OSEP the letter should be addressed to. Cathy questioned who the letter should be signed by. Tyler Hanson felt we should ask Bob Rutten who he feels should sign the letter. The committee agreed that the next step will be to turn it over to Bob Rutten when he returns from medical leave. Cathy reminded everyone that the committee was also concerned about the terminology of autism versus autism spectrum disorders but was unable to reach a consensus. Cathy asked if the subcommittee should reconvene to discuss it further. Tyler suggested to wait until Bob Rutten returns and get his thoughts on the matter.

Graduation Rate Subcommittee Update

Ed Boger recently served on the Graduation Rate subcommittee. Due to new regulations the NDDPI is now required to set a new graduation rate. The Graduation Rate subcommittee met to discuss what the rate should be and make a recommendation to NDDPI. The subcommittee's graduate rate recommendation was 80 – 85%. After seeking advice from various interest groups, the NDDPI's official graduation rate recommendation went in at 89%. In the subcommittee's opinion this rate is too high. Alison Dollar reported that last year's special education graduation rate was 71%. In the future it must meet the No Child Left Behind target rate. Robbin Hendrickson asked if the 71% included those that "aged out." Alison confirmed that anybody who doesn't have a high school diploma when they exit school is a drop out. For example, if a student leaves for job corp. it is not considered continuing your education and would be reported as a drop out. In some cases there is a court order for job corp. so the schools have no control over it. Alison said she would check with OSEP to see if she can do a data removal for those instances where it is court ordered. It won't change the final graduation rate but at least it will at least explain why the results are what they are. Cathy Haarstad felt that many parents would have a hard time accepting OSEP's definition of drop out.

Transition Survey (Indicator 14)

One year after exiting school students, or their parents, take a survey that collects information on whether the student has worked, attended post-secondary program, or both since leaving high school. This survey has been conducted since the mid 1990's and has always been an outside contract with the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD) to conduct the data. The contract for data collection is from July 1 – June 30, however, the data period set by OSEP is only April to September. Now with the online case mgmt system and the survey being moved into that system, DPI is looking at more efficient ways of collecting these data. For example, would it be better to have teachers conduct the surveys? Many of the states are conducting the survey by having teachers do them. Maybe teachers would agree to do this online survey with their students. Are there other ideas on how to do this survey? Right now the survey is online through MSU. Thus, the data is stored with MSU but Alison would like to get the data "home" with us. Alison asked the committee for any suggestions. Tyler Hanson said one of the areas of concern is trying to get to these students after they have exited. DPI usually has 800 exiters every year. In the survey this year they had 200-300 surveys so they are missing a lot of students. A lot of states feel that when you use the teachers the teachers often know where the students are this would be true here because ND is so small. Also, from the time the student leaves school to one year later there are a lot of changes in phone numbers. The NDDPI can now rely on TIENET to get a lot of that exit data but can't update the data once the student leaves. The survey has additional questions for use such as: do you have health insurance - is it through your parent's plan or your employer, etc. It also asks whether they are living alone independently in a sheltered workshop or residential setting. These questions are for the NDDPI's informational purposes as the indicator only requires the NDDPI to ask if the student has worked, gone to school or done both since they exited.

Parent Involvement Survey Results

Alison handed out the results of the parent survey. For years NDDPI has had an online survey on their website. At that time they were receiving about 1,000 parent responses out of the roughly 13,000 special education students. The survey is conducted to find out the parent's perception on how well schools facilitate parent involvement. The NDDPI revised the survey to match their needs for reporting on the parent indicator. This year instead of putting the survey online they printed it out and mailed it to each parent household that has a child in special education. So far they have received 1,967 responses with more surveys coming in every day. The parent responses are summarized on the second page of the handout. Overall they are finding that parents are very pleased. Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC) is planning to provide technical assistance for states with this indicator. Many states are finding it difficult to develop and conduct surveys that are parent and district friendly. The NDDPI will be involved with what MPRRC develops.