



The BSE Communicator

A Quarterly Update from the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education

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Summer Brings Many Opportunities for Learning

John J. Tommasini, Director

Welcome back to the 2008-09 school year! As we begin a new school year, I am excited about the special education reform that has taken place under my watch during the last two years. I continue to be impressed with the number of collaborative efforts between families and schools that support and enhance the quality of education and services provided for children with disabilities. At this time I would like to highlight a few of the major initiatives we will work together on throughout the new school year:



The special education cyclical monitoring process has been revised and updated. I would like to recognize the team that developed this process, especially the parents and the advocacy community. Two features include:

- Administrative interviews for school leadership that will highlight good practices within the respective school programs. It would be an additional benefit if school districts identify opportunities for improvement based on changes they see for the upcoming school year.
- The second critical piece is the addition of classroom observations. The purpose is the alignment of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) with each student's specific instructional program.



Another major challenge this year will be the implementation of the new regulations under Chapter 14. The BSE and the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) will soon be providing a Question and Answer sheet explaining the changes in the new regulations. The intermediate units (IUs) will be a critical partner in the rollout of the implementation of Chapter 14, in concert with single points of contact assigned geographically across the commonwealth (see BSE Staff Updates below).



Data continues to support reform with the Indicators for Success as part of the State Performance Plan (SPP). The SPP is a six-year plan through 2010, built around 20 federally required indicators of compliance and performance. States set measurable and rigorous targets for each year of the SPP, design improvement activities to reach the targets and report on their performance in meeting the SPP targets in an Annual Performance Report. They must also report to the public on the performance of all local education agencies (school districts, charter schools, and preschool programs) on these targets. Pennsylvania was one of only seven states to receive the Meets Requirements Determination from the federal Office of Special Education Programs in 2007 and one of only nine to receive that designation for 2008, consistently meeting goals for two consecutive years.

Successful Collaborations with Bureau of Teaching and Learning Support Services

The BSE and the Bureau of Teaching and Learning Support Services continue focused efforts on student success, including supporting the framework of the Standards Aligned Systems (SAS) with the goal that each student achieves core academic proficiency. The Distinguished School Leader/Distinguished Educators program enables school districts to "borrow" experienced educators and administrators for targeted intervention and assistance in struggling school districts or those that have not met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Another collaboration benefits both special and general education students. The Response to Intervention (RTI) program provides early identification and intervention of students experiencing academic or behavioral risk by monitoring their work and using data to design the most effective learning strategies for each student. The overarching goal is improving students' achievement with interventions matched to their instructional needs.



BSE Staff Updates

Marie Held is a new special education adviser in IU 3 (Northern region), and the Eastern region has a new special education adviser, Elizabeth Ziesloft. BSE also welcomes back

You're the only one
who can make a
difference. Whatever
your dream,
go for it!

Earvin "Magic" Johnson

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

*Edward G. Rendell,
Governor*

Department of Education

*Gerald L.
Zahorchak, D.Ed.,
Secretary*

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

*Diane Castelbuono,
Deputy Secretary*

Bureau of Special Education

*John J. Tommasini,
Director*

*Patricia Hozella,
Assistant Director*

Lynda Lupp, a special education adviser in the Central region, working with Right to Know, Assessment and RtI.

BSE Staff Assignments/Regions Updated - Following is a list of division chiefs and advisers, including statewide responsibilities such as Monitoring, Complaints and Special Education Plans and regions (IUs) served:

Masako Farrell, Chief, Division of Compliance, Monitoring and Planning, East – Thomas Reich (17, 18), Juanita Kirton (19, 20), William Riggan (21, 22), Stephen Weitzenhoffer (23, 24), Robert Moore (25/Chester Upland SD), Darnelle Knowlton/Richard Dickey (26), Walter Howard (charter schools only)

Transition – Maria Mardula (26)

Complaint Specialists (13-14, 16-26, 29)– Michael Carricato, Lisa Irgang

Thomas Seben, Chief, Division of Compliance, Monitoring and Planning, West – **State Task Force** – Amy Deluca

Advisers - Amy Deluca (1,2, Fayette County), John Machella (1, 6, 7, Washington/Greene counties & Frazier School District), Terry Dawson/Marie Held (3), Nancy Stanley (4, 27), Mary Lou Izzo (5), Richard Brown (6, 28), Patrick Scanlon (8)

School-Based Mental Health, Interagency/Homebound – Elizabeth Zeisloft

Complaint Specialists– Tyann Neal (1-4, 7, 8, 27, 28), Mary Lou Izzo (5, 6)

Richard Moss, Chief, Division of Compliance, Monitoring and Planning, Central/Technical Assistance –

Roxanne Oswald (9), Leah Kissick (10, 11)

Gifted – Shirley Curl (12), Dennis McLaughlin (13, 14), Roxanne Oswald (15), Deborah Sotack (16, 29)

Corrections – William Murphy

IDEA-B Grant, Approved Private Schools, Transition, Contingency Funds- Ronald Wells
Right to Know, Assessment/Response to Intervention (RtI) – Lynda Lupp

Accountability Block Grant, State Personnel Development Grant, Paraprofessionals – Shatarupa Podder

Fiscal – Sue Leonard, William Forgy

Special Education Advisory Panel – Richard Moss

Complaint Specialist (9-12, 15) – To Be Named

Director's Office

John J. Tommasini, Director

Patricia Hozella, Assistant Director

Policy – Patty Todd and Malcolm Conner, **State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report** – Sandy Zeleznik, **PennData/SPP** – Jodi Rissinger

Inclusive Schools DVDs Distributed, Now Available Online

The DVD, "Inclusive Schools: Learning... Working... Achieving Together," was distributed to each intermediate unit to be shared with the school districts in their area. It is now posted at: www.pattan.net/resources/streamingmedia-browse.aspx?UniqueID=03556

Special Education Forms Updated

The updated Special Education Forms, based on the new Chapter 14 Regulations, are located at: <http://www.pattan.net/regforms/EnglishSpecialEducationForms.aspx> and at www.pattan.net, under "Regulations and Forms."

One-Tier Due Process System in Place for 2008-09

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2007-2008 saw the beginning of Pennsylvania's historical shift to a one-tier due process system, under the revisions to Chapter 14 of the State Board regulations, which became effective at the beginning of FY 2008-2009. The Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) participated in numerous awareness and constituency input activities in order to assist the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), through the BSE, to construct the framework of this new system. ODR worked collaboratively with BSE to implement the policy decisions of the PDE.

Elizabeth Lee Black School Receives National Award

Elizabeth Lee Black School has become the only school in Pennsylvania-and one of just 26

nationwide-to have been named a School of Excellence by the National Association of Special Education Teachers. The designation is the highest honor that this organization confers on schools, which must meet rigorous professional criteria in 13 areas. The school is proud of the dedication and commitment shown by their faculty in helping to make dreams come true for students and families. More information at: www.BarberInstitute.org.

PaTTAN Consultant Named to State Board of Examiners

Nan Rodgers, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) educational consultant for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Assistive Technology and other projects, has been appointed to the Pennsylvania State Board of Examiners in Speech-Language and Hearing. The Board regulates the practice and licensure of persons offering speech-language and hearing services in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Nan, who will serve a three-year term on the Board, has been a consultant at PaTTAN for nine years.

Teaching Matters Videos Online

The Bureau of Teaching and Learning Support Services developed several "Teaching Matters" videos based on the following topics: Differentiated Instruction, Scaffolding, Teachers Modeling, Explicit Instruction, Metacognition and Engagement. There was a DVD release event for all of the educators shown in the DVD as well the student featured in the DVD and on the cover. The DVD is posted at:

www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=4228&mode=2

All of the videos are located at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jvz76pVG8xA

Summer Professional Development

Educational Resources for Children with Hearing Loss (ERCHL) - *Building Bridges: A Conference for Parents of Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*, at four sites around the state this summer, birth to 21 years, was a workshop intended for parents, caregivers and relatives of children who are deaf or hard of hearing using any type of communication method or having any level of hearing loss. A total of 160 participants were in attendance at the four sessions. The highlight of each Saturday conference was a presentation by a panel of parents at each site who shared their "Secrets of Success."

Governors Institute for Data Driven Instructional Practices in Reading and Mathematics, Hershey, July 13-18



Held at the Hershey Lodge & Convention Center and Milton Hershey School, the sessions provided learning opportunities for approximately 900 educators. The PDE, in collaboration with PaTTAN, offered a week-long institute providing district and school teams with evidence-based, research-validated practices in reading and mathematics designed to improve student performance. The institute incorporated opportunities for school-based improvement planning, utilizing learned evidence-based intervention strategies. School district teams collaborated daily to develop and refine effective program-focused improvement plans based on school

data and selected interventions. A list of keynote presenters is at: www.pattan.net.

The Deafblind Project's Annual Family Learning Conference: *Learning, Leaning, Laughing*, Harrisburg, July 18-20 – The conference was a learning and networking opportunity for families who have children with both a vision and hearing impairment and focused on enhancing the participation of the family in the educational process. A total of 20 families, including 23 children who are deafblind, and 26 siblings attended this year.

PA Community on Transition Conference: *Building Leadership to Promote Successful Outcomes*, State College, July 22-25 - The conference featured ways to expand the capacity of schools and community partners in promoting the successful transition of youth/young adults with disabilities to post-school outcomes of employment, post-secondary education and training, community participation and healthy lifestyles. Participants had the opportunity to learn about effective practices to assist youth/young adults with disabilities in achieving successful post-school outcomes. A total of 825 were in attendance and participants included: youth/young adults involved in the secondary transition process, families, caregivers, educators, agency staff, businesses/employers, PA

state legislators, bureau directors from the departments of Education, Welfare, Labor and Industry and Health. Also present at this year's conference were representatives from several national organizations, including the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, as well as transition stakeholders from Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Maryland and New York. Additional information regarding this year's conference and session handouts can be found at www.sharedwork.org/patransition.

Special Education Summer Leadership Academy Achieving Balance: Managing Compliance, Leading Improvement June 30-July 3 - More than 230 special education leaders began their summer by attending the Academy. PDE, BSE and PaTTAN, through the Leadership initiative, presented a four-day conference. Keynote speaker PDE Secretary of Education Dr. Gerald Zahorchak kicked off the Academy by highlighting the Pennsylvania Framework for a Standards Aligned System. He inspired participants to make connections to their roles as special education leaders, to remain committed to continuous school improvement on behalf of all children and welcomed collaboration in achieving those results. Participants put issues into legal perspective to develop visions for schools. A day was added this year for Special Education IU Directors that focused on their roles and responsibilities in supporting school districts and charter schools.

2008 School District of Philadelphia Governor's Institute, August 5-7

The High School of the Future was the site of the School District of Philadelphia's Governor's Institute on Data Driven Instructional Practices in Reading and Mathematics for School Improvement. School teams numbering 190 participated as school district and PaTTAN personnel partnered to facilitate this event. Keynotes by Dr. Leslie Trimmer, Project Manager of Standards Aligned Systems, PDE and Dr. Richard Maraschiello, Special Assistant to the PDE Secretary of Education, set the stage and centered the audience on "The Standards Aligned System" and "The Four Types of Assessment in Alignment with the Standards Aligned System." School District of Philadelphia Superintendent Dr. Arlene Ackerman was welcomed by the participants mid-week as she shared with them her action plans for supporting teachers and parent groups. Coursework mirrored the content of the July Governor's Institute in Hershey which provided the opportunity to bring the message and material from the larger state groups to Philadelphia and included Elementary and Secondary Reading and Math strands. The presenters' work was effectively linked to the Standards Aligned System and meant for immediate use in school improvement strategy planning at the building level for the Philadelphia teams.

National Autism Conference, State College, August 4-8 – Growing steadily each year, the conference had over 2500 in attendance, including 500 family members, and 100 students in the Children's Institute. Over 100 sessions were available for participants on a variety of autism-related topics. Twenty-seven states and three other countries were represented. There were almost 200 students in the ABA-4 course, one of the largest ever. (In the photo are the students in the Children's Institute performing their show "The Granny Awards" which they presented to a standing room only audience.)



Low Incidence Institute, State College,

August 4-8 –The Institute focused on topics related to serving students and young children with deafness and hearing loss, deafblindness, visual impairment, traumatic brain injury and multiple disabilities. New to the Low Incidence Institute this summer was a strand of LRE staff development topics geared towards parents and educators of students with significant cognitive disabilities, including: accessing the general education curriculum/classrooms through the Stepwise Process; Balancing Standards and Writing Standards Based IEPs; Effective Literacy Instruction and the Supplementary Aids and Services Toolkit. There were 250 participants at the institute with parents and children at the Great Start program.

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