

## **West Virginia Board of Education's Response to the 2014 Annual Report of the West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children**

The West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children (WVACEEC) is a state level committee mandated by federal and state law. Members are interested in the quality of education received by exceptional children and youth. The WVACEEC includes parents and individuals with exceptionalities, educational service providers, administrators, and representatives from a variety of related agencies. Participation is statewide and representative of diverse exceptionalities. The Council schedules and conducts regional meetings across the state to seek input and gain information about programs and services for exceptional students.

The West Virginia State Board of Education appreciates the efforts to identify the unmet needs of children with exceptionalities within West Virginia. The Board is pleased to respond to the recommendations presented at the June 2014 meeting.

### **Recommendation: Support for Personalized Learning through Results Driven Accountability**

*The Council recommends the Office of Special Programs (OSP) continues to provide professional development to enhance team teaching, increase student engagement, and promote parent involvement with a focus on results of student performance over time. Additionally, the Council recommends that OSP pursue creative means to address scheduling flexibility for team collaboration, data analysis, and collective problem solving.*

The Office of Special Programs (OSP) is committed to developing a framework which supports functional and longitudinal instructional content for student with disabilities and other special needs. The OSP continues to work toward ensuring professional development that addresses planning, design, and delivery of standards-based content with emphasis on individualized and appropriate strategies, supports, and interventions required by students with exceptionalities. Students must be provided meaningful access to general education coupled with appropriate opportunities to attain practical knowledge and skills which enable them to function as independently as possible upon exit from the school system.

The West Virginia Board of Education acknowledges and supports the Council's recommendation for the provision of professional development which focuses on student performance and results in the areas of team teaching, increasing student engagement, and promoting parent involvement. During the 2013-2014 school year, the OSP developed and presented several professional development trainings to accomplish this task. During the summer of 2013, state, RESA, and district staff were invited to attend three (3) day summer academies:

- **Support for Special Designed Instruction (SSDI) Academies**

In order to successfully implement the Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives (NxGCSOs) for all students, teachers need specific instructional strategies

that will assist them in presenting these new concepts and skills. Although the WV NxGCSOs establish consistent expected achievements, they do not prescribe how teachers should teach and modify their instruction in order for all learners to be successful. The content focus of the SSDI Academies was to provide for exceptional students access to the Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives (NxGCSOs) the Next Generation Essential and Community Elements (NxGECEs), the Early Learning Standards Framework, the Next Generation Learning Skills and Technology Tools Content Standards and Objectives, and the Career and Technical Education Content Skill Sets; writing Standards-Based Individualized Education Programs (SB-IEPs); and developing structures to close the achievement gap. Three (3) academies were provided.

- **Support for Personalized Instruction (SPI) Academies**

Teachers were scaffolded through adjusting their instructional practice to more efficiently and effectively align with the demands of our rapidly changing world and the specific needs of their students in the SPI Academies. The content of these Academies targets three, specific and related outcomes: (1) deeper knowledge and understanding of the NxGen Content Standards and Objectives; (2) belief in the value and power of evidence-based instructional practices; and (3) increased quantity and quality of implementation of these practices in classrooms across West Virginia. The instructional practices featured in July 2013 were Integrated Informative Assessment (IFA), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Differentiated Instruction (DI). Three (3) academies were provided.

- **Mathematics Academies**

Enhanced teacher content knowledge and instructional practices in mathematics resulting in student achievement gains in math for all students was the focus of the Mathematics Academies. Attending teachers deepened their understanding of mathematics to further embrace the rigor of the NxGCSOs while moving from a rote understanding of procedures to a deeper understanding of concepts. Each Math Academy provided an environment in which teachers learned to problem solve in a learner-centered environment which facilitated teachers' reflections of their own teaching practices. Teachers completed specially-designed modules/units on the MATHia and/or Cognitive Tutor Software. Two (2) academies were provided.

- **Pre-K Autism Academies**

The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), Office of Special Programs (OSP), in partnership with the Autism Training Center (ATC) offered training opportunities for Preschool Special Education and Universal Pre-K educators who work with preschool students with autism and/or Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD). Preschool educators were trained to develop and implement effective, innovative, and evidence-based instructional practices. Additionally, the selected cadre enhanced their skills on how to collaborate and support, not only the students they serve, but also their colleagues within their communities. Two (2) academies were provided.

The cohort of (100) Pre-K professionals included up to (4) nominated professionals from general and special education, per district. Participants were required to commit to participate in activities and training events for two (2) years. During the two (2) years, all participants are developing instructional expertise as an in-county Universal Pre-K Autism consultant. All participants were required to complete seven (7) days of autism specific training and assist personnel serving students with autism and other disabilities as designated by their county special education director and Universal Pre-K coordinator.

The SSDI, SPI, and Mathematics Academies continue to be offered during the summer of 2014, with the addition of the following:

- **Support for Collaborative Teaching Partnerships (SCTP) Academies**  
Co-teaching is two or more people sharing instructional responsibility for students assigned to the classroom. It is two or more adults simultaneously instructing a heterogeneous group of students in a coordinated fashion. Ann Beninghof, an internationally recognized consultant and trainer, will define co-teaching structures, identify the critical components of effective co-teaching, outline practical strategies that co-teachers use, and explain how to choose the best ways to meet the needs of individual students in the SCTP Academies. Two (2) academies are being provided.
- **School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (SWPBIS) Academies**  
The OSP in partnership with the Autism Training Center (ATC) is offering training opportunities to school teams in SWPBIS. SWPBIS is a systematic approach using evidence-based practices and data driven decision making to improve school climate and culture, improve academic and social outcomes, and increase learning for all students. It encompasses a wide range of systemic and individualized positive strategies to reinforce desired behaviors and diminish reoccurrences of challenging behaviors, while teaching appropriate behaviors to students. Two (2) SWPBIS Academies are being provided.

During the 2013-2014 school year six (6) single-day trainings in various locations in the state were provided to reinforce RESA technical assistance support specialists, district personnel, and WVDE school improvement staff. The training foci were:

- Support for Personalized Learning (SPL),
- Support for Personalized Instruction (SPI),
- Service Delivery/Co-teaching,
- Using Data to Improve Student Outcomes,
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and
- Strategies for Drop-out Prevention.

Five (5) single day trainings were provided on Standards-Based Individualized Education Programs (SB-IEPs).

The OSP has scheduled professional development to replicate the RESA technical assistance and school improvement training for the 2014-2015 school year. In addition, each of the eight RESAs will host sessions to educate district and RESA staff, as well as, parents and other community members on the revisions to WV Policy 2419: *Regulations for the Education of Exceptional Students*, including changes in the eligibility determinations.

Also in the 2014-2015 school year the OSP scheduled five (5) days of professional development to provide training on the development and criteria for the *Standards-Based IEP*. The training will occur in three (3) locations throughout the state.

During the 2013-2014 school year the institutions of higher education (IHEs), which offer certification programs for teachers of students with exceptionalities, and the OSP convened to share information and provide opportunities to collaborate on current practice and teacher expectations. The IHE representatives continue to be invited to attend statewide OSP leadership conferences and trainings.

The WVDE, Office of Special Programs website is being revamped and updated to improve navigation and provide specific instruction to the user. For the 2014-2015 school year, the presentations on the site will be expanded to include on-demand training modules.

### **Recommendation: Work Exploration and Experience Opportunities**

*The Council recommends that the West Virginia Department of Education and the Office of Special Programs support all districts in their effort to replicate proven successful work experience opportunities and provide professional development to teachers to build agency and family linkages.*

As noted in the West Virginia Annual Performance Report, the Office of Special Programs (OSP) provided professional development and guidance materials for documenting transition services in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and implementation of evidence-based transition strategies; embedded help boxes and links to transition guidance documents on the WVDE website into the statewide online IEP system; developed a report or audit within the system for IEPs of transition age students to determine compliance with the Transition Individualized Education Program Checklist; and incorporated standards-based IEP guidance into the online IEP.

The Office of Special Programs (OSP) disseminated the *Community Readiness Guidance Document* at the December 2013 Special Education Administrator's Conference. This document [http://wvde.state.us/osp/communitiyreadiness\\_guidanc%20\(1\).pdf](http://wvde.state.us/osp/communitiyreadiness_guidanc%20(1).pdf) is a resource for districts working to transition students with disabilities into the community. The community standards focus on practical academic and life skills which can be taught in community-based settings or natural environments that are a part of everyday life. In addition, Policy 2510 provides the ability for a district to develop a community-based concentration which supports IEP Team decisions

for community-based work experience. In addition, the OSP provides professional development on how to schedule a community-based concentration; the content in board approved CSOs; how to connect local business and industry to improve post-secondary employment outcomes; and how to use available career and technical education resources to improve the quality of services provided to students. Active collaboration with the Statewide Independent Living Centers and Division of Rehabilitation Services ensure that school and agency relationships increase through communication and planning to support students with disabilities as they transition from school into college or the workplace.

The WVDE, Office of Career and Technical Instruction (OCTI) and the OSP have designed a career technical education (CTE) certificate program, Individual Work Readiness Certificate (I-WRC) [http://wvde/state.wv.us/cte\\_swid\\_guidebook.pdf](http://wvde/state.wv.us/cte_swid_guidebook.pdf). The I-WRC is designed for students with disabilities with academic deficits who are enrolled in a CTE concentration. After high school these students who are interested can pursue entry level support jobs related to their CTE career cluster concentration. This program assists students to proceed from the school setting to post-secondary training in a preferred occupational field with certification and relevant skill sets.

Collaboration with the Office of Secondary Learning and the Office of Career and Technical Instruction provides ongoing support and professional development opportunities for districts working to build agency and family linkages. Information on the Personalized Education Plan (PEP) and the options that it includes will further aid teachers working to create a plan for post-secondary success.

### **Recommendation: Community Schools to Address Behavioral and Mental Health**

*The Council recommends that the West Virginia Department of Education increase collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Resources, the Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, and the WV School Health Technical Assistance Center to establish resources in every county for community schools that support social/emotional needs of students and families with the emphasis on programs and services that focus on positive school climate and are based on evidence of positive outcomes.*

The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), Office of Special Programs (OSP) is committed to establishing resources in every county for community schools that support the social and emotional needs of students and families. The emphasis is on programs and services that focus on positive school climate based on evidence of promising outcomes. According to the National Coalition for Community Schools, the WVDE is the first in the nation to have designated community schools staff.

- **West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) Support:**

The WVBE acknowledges and supports the Council's recommendation for Community Schools. The Board's proposed Policy 2425: Community Schools Promoting Health, Safety, Well-Being, and Academic Success of Students is designed to provide a

framework for schools as they work to address the complex needs of students. The policy has been prepared for county boards to embrace social and emotional needs of students and families without required mandates. It recognizes that schools cannot meet the multifaceted needs of students alone. Successful schools recognize the importance of collaborating with other organizations to ensure that student needs are addressed preparing them to be healthy and ready to learn.

- **Collaboration:**

- The OSP regularly collaborates with the Department of Health and Human Resources (WVDHHR), Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, and WV School Health Technical Assistance Center at Marshall University to establish resources in every county. Expanded School Mental Health is a state level committee established in 2006 through a Memorandum of Understanding between the WVDE and the WVDHHR to collaborate on topics related to the mental health needs of school-age youth. WVDE, OSP is an active member.
- WVDE continues to partner with the West Virginia School Health Technical Assistance team to promote more community collaboration within schools using the community schools model (including medical, mental health and dental health).

- **Training:**

- **KidStrong** – The OSP facilitates an annual KidStrong Conference. This is the largest school health conference in West Virginia that historically boasts an attendance of over 750 people. For two years the conference theme has been building community and school partnerships. The 2014 conference tracks included: Community Schools; Education (Early Learning, School Readiness, and Special Programs); Services (Immunization Summit, School Health, Oral Health, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Speech and Language); and Environment (PBIS, School Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and School Climate and Safety).
- **Webinars** – The OSP partners with West Virginia School Health Technical Assistance Center at Marshall University to offer monthly professional development opportunities based on needs and current practice.

- **Promotion** – The OSP continuously monitors and promotes support for community school partnerships:

- **2014 Innovation Zone (IZ) Grants** – Four (4) schools applied and received grants to implement the community school model. The 2015 IZ Grants will also include a community school option for funding.
- **Safe and Supportive School Grant** – Eleven (11) Safe and Supportive School (S3) grantees are working to implement mental health services. Each school

implemented an intervention plan accordingly. *Each S3 grantee has access to \$10,000 for Mental Health services as part of an intervention plan.*

- **Grants** – The WVDE OSP and Office of Secondary Learning (housing the school safety initiative) continue to apply for federal grants to support the growing mental health needs of children in West Virginia public schools. WVDE has currently submitted the following grant applications:
  - SAMHSA-Now is the Time – Project Aware;
  - US Department of Education-School Climate Transformation Grant;
  - US Department of Justice Grant – Developing Knowledge About What Works to Make Schools Safe in conjunction with the WV Department of Justice, Marshall University, and the US Attorney of the Southern District of WV; and the
  - US Department of Education-School Emergency Management Program.