

2007 - 2008 Annual Report



Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee

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What is CSEAC

The Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC) is a state level committee mandated by federal and state law. Members are interested in the education of children/youth with disabilities. We include parents of, and individuals with disabilities, educational service providers, administrators and representatives from a variety of related agencies. Participation is statewide and representative of diverse disabilities.

Purpose of CSEAC

- Provide input and assistance to the State Board of Education
- Advise the State Director of Special Education
- Advocate and promote communication, collaboration and partnership among educational service providers, children/youth, parents and administrators
- Serve as a liaison among parents of children with special needs, local educational agencies and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

Vision Statement of CSEAC

All learners are respected and challenged with high expectations, their needs are met, and student aspirations for success are fulfilled.

Mission Statement of CSEAC

Our mission is to actively represent children/youth with disabilities and impact decisions made on their behalf to enhance the quality of educational services.

CSEAC Members 2007 - 2008

Name	Congressional District
Canase Beveridge	3
Orvin Breningstall	1
Dianna Chrisman	4
Paula Christina *Co-Chair	2
Jann Clevenger	6
Tamara Durbin	4
William Evans	5
Lynne Fitzhugh	5
Lisa Schwartz Franklin *Co-Chair	6
Michelle Gonzalez-Yoder	7
Mary Griffin	7
Diana Kellner	7
Cathy Lines	6
Jana Macias	3
Lu McDaniel	6
Jane Russell Miller	2
Linn Oliver	7
Corey Pierce	4
Yvette Plummer	7
Tim Rea	6
Jack Robinson	1
Karen Rutledge	1
Steven Sandoval	4
Dana Scott	1
Allison Sedlacek	4
Alison Seyler	5
Robin Singer	6
Representative Judy Solano	2
Elenn Steinberg	1
Cindy Ucker	5
Mike Wales	6
Menda Warne	4
Ian Watlington	1
Mark Zentner	2

**Reflections from the Co-Chairs
Paula Christina and Lisa Schwartz Franklin**

Scheduled Meetings for 2008-2009

September 18, 2008
November 20, 2008
February 19, 2009
April 16, 2009
July 23 & 24, 2009

Contact the Exceptional Student Leadership Unit for times and locations at 303-866-6943.

For Additional Information

For further information about the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee, please visit www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/CSEAC.asp, call 303-866-6943, or contact one of the following persons:

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Ed Steinberg, Colorado Department of Education
State Director, Student Support Services
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It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as co-chairs of the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee during the 2007 – 2008 year. This year our theme was *Go the Distance* and the committee identified three goals for our work throughout the year:

- ◆ **Develop an understanding of the Response to Intervention implementation manual and monitor the implementation through on-going information gathering from a variety of sources**
- ◆ **Increase the visibility of CSEAC by connecting with local SEACs and hosting regional meetings across the state**
- ◆ **Develop a follow up plan to monitor the effectiveness of CSEAC position papers**

As co-chairs, we felt it was important to continue working on several of the initiatives that CSEAC has started over the past years. We began this effort by reviewing previous CSEAC accomplishments with the entire committee at our annual retreat. From this review, the above goals were developed and three Ad Hoc committees were formed to address these goals throughout the year.

We are pleased to report that a plan is being developed to identify a communication vehicle to provide review of the CSEAC position papers through Colorado Department of Education on regular basis. Two Ad Hoc committees will continue during the 2008-09 year. We are continuing to partner with CDE staff around implementation efforts with Response to Intervention, especially related to parent partnerships. We hope to partner with Board of Education members to host regional meetings throughout Colorado.

- **CSEAC recommends closer, on-going communication between CDE staff and members of CSEAC regarding the implementation efforts of Response to Intervention across the State. CSEAC strongly believes there is benefit to including parents in planning in a meaningful way at all levels of implementation of Response to Intervention initiatives.**
- **CSEAC recommends that family/professional partnerships be modeled throughout the planning and implementation of Response to Intervention efforts. CSEAC members are willing to be a regional resource to CDE staff and trainers as RTI implementation goes forward and it is recommended that CDE staff utilize the current organizational structures of CSEAC and Parent Education and Assistance for Kids (PEAK) to assist in planning and presenting regional trainings.**
- **CSEAC recommends the involvement of special education representation on local District Accountability Committees in order to help fulfill the requirements of the State Performance Plan.**
- **CSEAC recommends the creation of local Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) in every school district across the state. Currently there are 16 local SEACs across the State. CSEAC will present information to special education directors at their fall conference and offer to assist in the formation of local SEACs.**
- **CSEAC recommends partnering with State Board of Education Members to hold community forums. The purpose of these meetings would be to hear parent voices on important educational topics as well as to bridge communication between parents, parent groups and special education directors and providers.**
- **CSEAC recommends utilizing on-going CDE communications sources to provide a summary of past CSEAC position papers and statements and to inform audiences of upcoming CSEAC meetings.**

The following new members have been appointed by the Colorado State Board of Education and will join the CSEAC in July, 2008:

Jami Boarman – representing district charter school administrators (Congressional District 6)

Pam Christy – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 6)

Nita McAuliffe – representing special education administrators (Congressional District 3)

Gloria Mounts – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 3)

Duane Richert – representing the Division of Youth Corrections from the Department of Corrections (Congressional District 3)

Erin Ross – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 2)

Mimi Thurston – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 3)

Robert Ward – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 6)

Sub-Committee Reports and Highlights

The **Membership Subcommittee**, chaired by Jann Clevenger, began its process of recommending new members for CSEAC in September 2007. A notice of vacancies was widely distributed. The committee specifically focused on recruiting parents from rural areas, specifically Congressional District 3 in order to improve representation from that district. A total of 17 applicants indicated interest in joining CSEAC. This was another year of great interest in membership and the committee found the quality of applicants to be exceptional. We were fortunate to have highly qualified candidates for almost all positions, multiple candidates for most positions, and a wide representation of Congressional Districts.

All candidates were interviewed by phone and several conference calls reviewing the applicants took place in January 2008.

The position of a representative from a private school continues to be hard to fill and there were no candidates this year. The committee is currently attempting a more direct recruiting strategy, and we hope to appoint an applicant for an interim position. The committee also retained the names of three alternates for unforeseen resignations.

Recommendations were submitted to the Colorado State Board of Education in March 2008. Eight candidates were appointed and notified in April 2008. Those applicants not selected were also notified and encouraged to apply again to CSEAC for next year. New members will be welcomed at our annual retreat in July 2008. The Membership Subcommittee will continue the mentoring program for new members at the retreat.

The committee continues to focus on the recruiting of individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals who may be current college students or recent graduates of programs in special education.

Scope of CSEAC Work

- Throughout the year we have provided input to the State Performance Plan. During the retreat, CSEAC reviewed indicators and gave input to CDE staff regarding parent involvement, graduation rates, post-secondary outcomes, and transition. Later in the spring, we heard an update on the measurement of all indicators in the State Performance Plan.
- During the summer and fall, CSEAC members were active in attending the hearings for the Exceptional Children's Educational Act rules that were being revised. CSEAC developed a position statement and members testified at the community rules forums, as well as at the State Board of Education meeting in September 2007.
- In an effort to continue to build upon past CSEAC work, we solicited input from CSEAC members and from local SEAC members regarding ways to "bridge" the communication gap between local special education directors and parent groups. These ideas will be published as an insert to the previously produced CSEAC brochure, "Forming a Local Special Education Advisory Committee." This brochure can also be found on the Colorado Department of Education website at www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/CSEAC.asp.
- Received 17 applications for committee membership. Interviewed and recommended eight new members to the State Board of Education in March 2008. We will welcome these new members at the CSEAC retreat in July.

Scope of CSEAC Work

- We continued to include student voices in the CSEAC meetings with the presentation from a group of middle school students and their school psychologist on a research-based intervention for students at risk and identified with disabilities. This program provides students with an opportunity to mentor young children and has the positive effect of reducing the number of office referrals for the at-risk youth involved in the program.
- We heard a panel presentation that included parents and CSEAC members who worked on the RtI task force. We received regular updates from the State Special Education Director as well as CDE staff working on Response to Intervention training efforts.
- For the first time, but what we hope will be an annual event, we invited representatives from local SEAC's to attend the April meeting. During this meeting, we spent time in small groups discussing the successes and challenges of the local SEACs as well as finding out ways that CSEAC can support the efforts of these local groups.
- As part of our mandated oversight responsibility, we received information on the legal due process and complaint procedures in Colorado from CDE staff. We reviewed and discussed the outcomes of the due process proceedings and CSEAC members now receive regular email updates from CDE regarding the resolution of any due process or complaint proceedings.

The **State Performance Plan (SPP)** sub-committee, chaired by Diana Kellner, advised the Colorado Department of Education on the development and implementation of the Colorado Special Education State Performance Plan. During the 2007-2008 school year, the sub-committee completed the following activities:

The Committee discussed the need for an explanation of the State Performance Plan by a representative of CDE. This would be especially helpful to new members of the committee. Andrej Birjulin made available to the CSEAC information regarding the State Performance Plan, including 3 brochures: 20 Indicators for Success, the 2007 Questions and Answers, and Levels of Determination. At the April, 2008 meeting Laura Freppel reviewed the indicators on the State Performance Plan and provided documents on the current plan. CSEAC members were given an opportunity to ask questions about the data with particular interest in the targets.

The SPP Committee planned to work with the Communication Committee on a survey to parents regarding the effectiveness of communication between parents of children with special needs and district personnel and to discover the effectiveness of local SEACs. The SPP Committee also wanted some avenue for talking to members of local SEACs. In this context, members of local SEACs were invited to the April meeting for a discussion of current status of local SEACs.

The SPP Committee has had a major focus on parent involvement as one indicator in the State Performance Plan. There is an on-going concern about the rate of return of parent survey and the sub-committee will continue to follow up on this issue in the future.

Sub-Committee Reports and Highlights

Standing Sub-Committees continued their work as follows:

The **Policy and Legislative** sub-committee, chaired by Tim Rea, pursued two primary goals in 2008:

- 1) Monitor, disseminate information about, and influence revisions to the State of Colorado Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA).
- 2) Monitor ongoing national, state, and local activities relevant to Special Education, and apprise members of important legislative and policy issues.

The Sub-committee met the first goal by monitoring and supporting CSEAC's participation in the ECEA rule making process. The second goal was met by the issue on the CSEAC listserv of the monthly "Policy & Legislative Update". The Update includes information on major policy issues, federal and state actions, and current bills in the Colorado State Legislature impacting special education.

The **Communications** sub-committee continued to work on goals including increasing the visibility of CSEAC that included making contacts with local SEACs, and supporting local SEAC growth. Another goal included increasing the distribution of information and a third goal included working with CDE communications office to publicize CSEAC meetings.

The Communications subcommittee has worked with the co-chairs and the State Performance Plan Sub-committee toward these goals.

The **By-Laws** sub-committee, chaired by Jack Robinson, did not have changes to the by-laws during the 2007 – 2008 year.

Scope of CSEAC Work

- The Committee received regular reports and legislative updates from Mrs. Peggy Littleton, liaison to the State Board of Education and Representative July Solano. Representative Solano solicited CSEAC member input regarding proposed current and future legislation.
- In May 2008, co-chairs Paula Christina and Lisa Franklin provided an update to the State Board of Education regarding the CSEAC initiatives and accomplishments through the spring. They requested CDE support for enhancing parent professional partnerships as the RtI trainings are rolled out and they requested support from State Board of Education members toward efforts to host regional meetings in order for parent voices across the state to be included in educational discussions.
- CSEAC co-chairs were invited by the Assistant Commissioner to meet regularly with representatives of PEAK Parent Center, as well as the Denver-Metro Community Parent Resource Center, to begin to work together to address build bridges between local parent groups and local special education directors.
- Members served as CSEAC representatives on a number of committees this year including: Response to Intervention (RTI) Implementation Committee, 2% Flexibility Modified Achievement Standards Committee, Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) Alignment Committee, Eligible Facilities Advisory Committee, Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council, Colorado LINKS for Mental Health. Members participate on local SEAC's where available.

Sub-Committee Reports and Highlights

Three Ad Hoc Sub-committees were formed this year as a vehicle to address overall CSEAC goals developed at the 2007 Retreat. The co-chairs worked closely with these sub-committees to develop Action Plans and to monitor activities throughout the year. The work of two of the sub-committees will continue into the 2008-2009 year.

Response to Intervention Implementation Ad Hoc Committee

Goal Statement: Develop an understanding of the CDE Response to Implementation manual and monitor the implementation through on-going information gathering from a variety of sources.

Members: Lisa Franklin – Chair, Corey Pierce, Diana Kellner, Tamara Durbin, Canase Beveridge, Cathy Lines

Accomplishments:

- Various members volunteered to contact staff at CDE for updates around the development of the implementation manual.
- CSEAC hosted a panel presentation by CSEAC members who had participated on the RtI task force.
- CSEAC generated recommendations about parent partnerships and forwarded these to the CDE staff working on implementation.
- A introductory presentation by CDE staff using the RtI video was made and the staff member met with the subcommittee to discuss next steps and receive recommendations.
- Conference calls and individual calls were made to CDE staff for updates around implementation and information was reported back to the subcommittee.

Regional Outreach (Meetings) Ad Hoc Committee

Goal Statement: Increase CSEAC visibility and communication with stakeholders throughout the state. Begin to establish a network of communication between parents, school districts and CDE

Committee Members: Paula Christina - Chair, Jana Macias, Cathy Lines, Jane Russell Miller, Bill Evans, Linn Oliver, Canase Beveridge, Lu McDaniel, Elenn Steinberg, Lynne Fitzhugh

Sub-Committee Reports and Highlights

Purpose:

- To increase parent partnership and communication with local school districts/LEA's within Special Education services and programs.
- To encourage and support the creation of effective local SEAC's.

Accomplishments:

- Identified current local SEAC's with contact information
- Invited SEAC representatives to CSEAC meeting - Shared information and gathered new ideas
- Created CSEAC banner to increase visibility
- Gave recommendation to the State Representative Liaison for possible legislation by recommending Special Education representation on District Accountability Committee's (DAC).

Position Papers Ad-Hoc Committee on Effectiveness and Awareness

Goal Statement: Develop a follow up plan to monitor effectiveness of CSEAC position papers.

Committee members included Orvin Breningstall, Mark Zentner, Michael Wales, Alison Seyler, Jann Clevenger, Cindy Ucker, Lu McDaniel, Tim Rea and Karen Rutledge

Accomplishments:

- Reviewed past CDE dissemination of position papers and received a list of all email lists that CDE/ESLU keeps.
- Reviewed selected previous position papers and statements and summarized information in a one page or less format.
- Developed a template for CSEAC E-News, we wanted to include one position statement per CSEAC E-News and include this in the Scoop (CDE newsletter). We thought these publications would provide an easy way to redistribute the position statements and help to enhance CSEAC's visibility.
- Follow up by co-chairs with Assistant Commissioner, Ed Steinberg, indicated a willingness to investigate a possible vehicle through CDE communication systems that will provide for regular publication of CSEAC position statements and meeting information.