Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)

LISTENING AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING
8:00 A.M.-10:00 A.M.-JANUARY 14, 2011
DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
PRICKETT CONFERENCE ROOM, 1ST FLOOR
100 SUNNYSIDE ROAD, SMYRNA, DE 19978

(*Red denotes items which have been corrected, after the sub-committee's review of the minutes at their 1.28.11 meeting)

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wendy Strauss/Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC); Julie Johnson, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee(GACEC), Thierry Morlet (A.I. DuPont), Kyle Hodges/State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD), Brian Touchette/Delaware Department of Education (DOE), Tina Fredrickson/Delaware School for the Deaf (DSD), Nick Fina (CHOICES), Lou Bartsoshesky (Christiana Care, A.I. DuPont)

OTHERS PRESENT: The Honorable S. Quinton Johnson, The Honorable Ed Osienski, Fran Fletcher (University of Delaware-Facilitator), Kristin Mullen (GACEC)

MEMBERS ABSENT: There were no members absent, pending the approval of Deb Bosso (DSD) by the sub-committee.

With all members being present, Wendy Strauss called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. She began by telling the sub-committee that the first GACEC Advisory Committee for the Education of Individuals with Hearing Loss (hereafter referred to as the "main advisory committee" or "main committee") meeting had been held on Wednesday of the same week, and that it was agreed by the main advisory committee that the Listening and Spoken Language Sub-Committee (hereafter referred to as the "sub-committee" or "the committee") should go forward. Wendy thanked the sub-committee members for coming, as well as guests Representative S. Quinton Johnson and Representative Ed Osienski, who have agreed to consult with the sub-committee as needed.

Wendy then invited all present to introduce themselves, which they did. Those present introduced themselves as follows:

Ed Osienski-Representative for the 24th district
Quinn Johnson- Representative for the 8th district, which includes the Middletown, Townsend and Clayton area
Julie Johnson-Chair of the Listening and Spoken Language Sub-Committee and main committee, GACEC member, and also representing Delaware Hands and Voices
Thierry Morlet-Neuroscientist with A.I. DuPont
Kyle Hodges-SCPD
Kristin Mullen-GACEC
Fran Fletcher-UD-Facilitator
Brian Touchette-DOE-Exceptional Children Division
Tina Fredrickson-Statewide Coordinator for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programs
Lou Bartoshesky-Pediatrician and Geneticist with the Genetics and Hearing Loss Clinic at A.I. DuPont, also with Christiana Hospital and Public Health
Nick Fina- Member of SCPD, and also a leader of the CHOICES organization.
Wendy Strauss-GACEC

After the introductions were completed, Wendy began the meeting by stating that the GACEC assisted in creating the sub-committee after hearing from CHOICES and DSD that there was a lack of a Statewide Needs Assessment, as well as a strategic plan for the education of children who are deaf or hard of hearing in Delaware. From that discussion came other topics of importance that it was felt needed to be addressed. One of the goals the Strategic Plan wishes to address is the need for a Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) Program, which is being developed right now, and which Tina will discuss with the sub-committee.

Wendy also stressed the need for working together for concentrated advocacy, stating that if the group is consistent with both communicating and working toward common goals, it will make it much easier for legislators to understand what the sub-committee is recommending or requesting. This will aid in creating the best resources for the children of Delaware, which is one of the sub-committee's greatest concerns

Wendy then went on to state the **Ground Rules**, which are as follows:

- Cell phone on vibrate or turned off
- Listen for understanding
- One conversation at a time
- Disagree with the opinion, not the person. Be respectful.
- Everyone's viewpoint has merit.
- Ask to be acknowledged by raising your hand.
- All communication should go through the sub-committee, which will then route it to the main committee, then the GACEC, then be disseminated as appropriate.

At this time, Wendy asked the members if they felt that it was necessary to identify themselves by first name when speaking, as this was suggested and implemented during the Wednesday evening main advisory committee meeting. The consensus of the sub-committee members was that it was not necessary to do so.

Julie Johnson then went over the meeting objectives and a brief list of what would be discussed. The first item the sub-committee was to discuss was an overview of the charge statement. Tina would then talk about the complexities of establishing a LSL classroom, and would then inform the sub-committee what the concept design entails. Wendy and Kyle were then to share information from their visit to the Clarke School. Julie then directed the sub-committee member's attention to the report from CHOICES regarding their thoughts on the LSL classroom, and said that Nick would briefly discuss this report. Next, Julie wanted to address the physical location of the LSL classroom. After that, Julie requested the sub-committee to discuss what their next steps would be, primarily focusing on individual assignments, meeting schedules, and possibly changing the meeting times to allow for an early childhood teacher (Deb Bosso of DSD) to attend the meetings. The need to discuss the timing to fold the sub-committee back into the main advisory committee was next in line for discussion. Julie then reminded the sub-committee that she had asked Fran to let her know when it was 9:45 a.m., so that any ongoing discussions would be stopped in order to discuss the upcoming meeting schedule. Fran then asked the sub-committee members if they were all able to stay for the full meeting, at which time Lou Bartoshesky said that he would need to leave by 9:30 a.m.

Nick then asked Julie a question about the agenda regarding the charge statement, which says the sub-committee will develop a Project Schedule for the implementation of the LSL classroom. Nick questioned at which point will the sub-committee discuss the tasks and dependencies that make up the Project Schedule regarding what goes into developing a LSL class, pointing out that it makes little sense to discuss much else until that roadmap is in place. Julie then stated that she felt this could be discussed under the "next steps" agenda item, and reminded all those present that time is of the essence and that the goal is to get the LSL classroom up and running by next school year.

Julie directed the sub-committee's attention to the Charge Statement, a copy of which was given to each person present at the meeting. Julie asked the sub-committee members to read over the charge statement, then went on to say that the sub-committee is meant to allow for the members to offer their different perspectives on the design, planning and implementation of the LSL monolingual preschool program. Julie stated that the sub-committee meetings are the place for those discussions, noting that the physical location of the classroom, as well as a time line for the development of the LSL classroom were crucial things to be determined. Lou then asked Julie to define monolingual, which Julie explained to be instruction in one language (English, in the case of the Delaware program) with no sign language. Nick then asked Julie to clarify for all present what LSL means, which she told all assembled means Listening and Spoken Language. Julie then turned the discussion over to Tina, so that she could share details about the plans for the proposed LSL Classroom.

A copy of Tina's presentation was given to each person present.

Tina began by stating that LSL is the generally accepted term for what was formerly referred to as Auditory Verbal Instruction. The LSL program that Tina is working on implementing for the 2011 school year would be for children from the age of 18 months to 5 years old. There would be two times of day for classroom time, with young kids in the morning, and older children in the afternoon. The goal for the classroom is to prepare students to enter elementary school with age and/or grade-appropriate listening and learning skills. Tina is seeking the sub-committee's input on the academics portion of her plan, regarding what age and/or grade-appropriate academic skills the sub-committee feels that the LSL classroom should focus on. Criteria for sufficient auditory access to learn through audition is one of the current criteria for admission into the program. However, Tina felt this description to be too vague, and asked for the sub-committee to share any thoughts about specific criteria they feel should be met before admission into the program is considered. Tina emphasized that it is important for the program to be the correct choice for each particular child, and that each child's success is the most important thing to consider. Children in the LSL classroom may attend up to five days a week, or as little as one or two days a week. Each child's schedule will be determined by the child's parents and the IEP team. Some standards and resources that Tina consulted in the initial design of the LSL classroom were the National Education of Young Children Standards, 10 Signs of a Great Preschool, and also the National Association for Early Childhood Special Education Position Statement, which has four categories.

The curriculum to be used in the LSL classroom will be the same one utilized by Christina School District, which has already been approved by the State Board of Education. After seeing a presentation by Dawn Goldberg, and at the suggestion of Nick, Tina also decided to add "Foundations for Literacy" to her resources. She will also be consulting with Essie Goldsmith, who will help look at the curriculum to be sure that it is appropriate for the LSL classroom. Tina also plans to increase the parent education piece for this classroom, noting that oftentimes when kids hit preschool, the parent piece stops, which she doesn't want to happen. DSD will provide parent education from age 0-5, but once the child hits kindergarten, parent education will then become the concern of the school district. This is being implemented for late-identified children that might enter the program. These children may still be learning about things such as audiograms, that parents would miss out on in the birth to three model.

Regarding hearing and peer role models, this depends on where the location of the LSL classroom is determined to be. One such way to implement peer role models is reverse mainstreaming. An example of this would be a preschool housed within the Christina School District Early Childhood Education Center. With reverse mainstreaming, Tina said, they will hand pick kids to come into the LSL classroom at first, and then move on to more traditional mainstreaming opportunities. Tina said that they plan to put out feelers to parents to see if they would like their child to attend the preschool to be with the children in the LSL classroom. The classrooms are checked out, or will be checked out, by an educational audiologist, to make sure that each room is a prime listening

environment. Tina said that she also has Thierry and Dr. Taxiedo on hand for consultation. Each child will also continue to receive personalized education per their IFSP and their IEP.

Regarding evaluation, assessment, and progress monitoring, Tina broke down the assessments for the LSL Classroom (which she notes are not exhaustive lists) but many are used nationwide and have been cross walked, which means they have been matched with state education standards. Tina has taken advice from Mary Kay Therres regarding overall language development skills assessments as well as developmental benchmarks. The assessment program used by Christina School District is Teaching Strategies GOLD. Instructional personnel consist of one teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing and one Speech Language Pathologist (SLP). The SLP is also charged with conducting individualized therapy sessions with each child, and carrying out the parent education piece as well. Tina is hoping to find someone with LSL and AVT Certification, but said that if not, DSD would also consider hiring someone with experience working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing, as long as they were willing to sit for their LSL and AVT Certification in the future. Tina also consulted with Mary Ellen Nevins, founder of Professional Preparation for Cochlear Implants (PPCI) who has been working with children with cochlear implants for 20+ years, and has knowledge to share about post cochlear-implantation benchmarks.

Funding will be used under Needs Based Funding, which will flow through the Christina School District. Tina stated that she is already meeting with consultants, and wants promotional materials for the new LSL classroom to be done by the end of March 2011, with the classroom up and running by September 2011. Tina shared some promotional materials from Boys Town International, and stated that she would like to model their promotional literature after the Boys Town International materials. She also shared literature from the Clarke School in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. In active planning actions, DSD has already hired a SLP to work in the classroom. The SLP for the new LSL classroom has worked at Archbishop Ryan Auditory Oral School in Philadelphia, and is willing to be mentored and work toward LSL and AVT Certification. The SLP will start work on May 1, 2011. Tina states that DSD wants to also hire the LSL classroom teacher by then, so that he or she can begin to develop lesson plans and hit ground running in September 2011. In conclusion, Tina then noted that the referral process needs to be worked on.

Nick requested that Tina elaborate on what is required for LSLS Certification. Tina informed the sub-committee that it is a very involved process, administered by A.G. Bell. LSLS Certification candidates must have (she believes) 900 hours working with auditory only children, must be mentored by someone with LSL and AVT Certification, after which they will have to sit for their exam, which costs $200.00. Statewide Programs will pay for the LSLS Certification Candidate to take the test the first time. If the candidate does not pass the test the first time, they will be responsible for any future testing costs. Tina said that hopefully Mary Kay will mentor some of the individuals.

Kyle then addressed Tina regarding her statement that she hopes to hire someone with LSL and AVT Certification. Kyle questioned the likelihood of finding someone with those certifications in the short time frame set forth to develop the LSL Classroom by DSD. Tina replied that earlier in 2010, DSD had several openings for teaching positions. Della Thomas (Director of Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind and DSD) told Tina that many of the applicants she screened had gone through Auditory Oral college programs. Tina stated that this leaves her optimistic that finding someone with the necessary certifications should not be that difficult. She pointed out that she herself doesn't have that certification, but she knows what to do with the children in her school. Tina told the sub-committee that she went through PPCIT (Professional Preparation for Cochlear Implant Training,) and said that her 14 years of career experience in education and education administration have been more essential to her knowledge base than that training. She went on to say that she would do her best to hire someone with the desired certifications.

Nick shared that A.G. Bell states that LSLS Certification is held by approximately 590 people worldwide, 2/3 of whom reside in the United States. Nick said this means that there are approximately 400 people with LSLS Certification in the United States. Tina pointed out that more US Colleges are offering LSLS Certification and/or training, and re-iterated that she is hopeful to find someone with the desired certifications.

Nick stated that when he visited the Bergen County New Jersey Program run by Kathy Trenni (president of A.G. Bell), Kathy related that many of her staff members were graduates of the College of New Jersey. Kathy said A.G. Bell often hires staff who are graduates of the College of New Jersey Program, and A.G. Bell then has to re-educate these staff members, as they are not being educated properly at the College of New Jersey. Nick emphasized that he hopes that DSD will find someone who is at least in the active mentoring stage, if not already certified.

Tina asked for any more questions, noting that if the sub-committee thought of any questions later, to please e-mail them to her.

Brian Touchette broached the subject of academics. Brian asked Tina if the issue of academics is something that a decision has to be made on soon. Tina replied that yes, that is a somewhat pressing issue that she would welcome input from the sub-committee regarding academics.

Julie then asked all assembled if there were any further questions for Tina, before asking Kyle and Wendy to give a brief description of their visit to the Clarke School in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Nick had also gone on the trip to the Clarke School with Wendy and Kyle. Wendy stated that she would prefer for Kyle to give the synopsis, as he had written the report that was given to each sub-committee member.

Kyle began by inviting both Nick and Wendy to interject during his description of the Clarke School visit as they deemed necessary. He said that he believed most of the

people assembled probably already know about the Clarke School, but that he himself had not heard of it until the subject of a LSL classroom came up, at which time Nick suggested a visit. Wendy, Kyle and Nick visited the Clarke School in December of 2010, in order to observe some of the methods that are utilized by the school. After meeting with the director, Kyle learned that the Clarke School was begun in 1867. The Bryn Mawr school has been open since 2001, and he believes that there are five other locations in the United States. Their focus is on a LSL program that teaches deaf and hard of hearing children to listen and speak. The Clarke School reports that they mainstream most of the children involved in their program by kindergarten. The school prides themselves on the use an individualized strategy based on each child's hearing loss, and on helping parents to make an informed decision regarding their child's education. Kyle noted a list in his report of the services that the Clarke School provides. Wendy, Kyle and Nick were primarily on site to learn more about the pre-school and kindergarten programs. The visitors were also able to observe first-hand how a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) works with the children. Kyle said that he learned that, ideally, children should be diagnosed by the age of three months, then (if the parents choose) be fitted with amplification or implants, and then enrolled in a LSL program by six months. This time frame, it was explained to Kyle, is critical in order to maximize the child's chances of learning listening and spoken language capabilities. Kyle learned that the window of time to develop listening and spoken language capabilities is open between birth and age four. He noted that it was impressive to observe the students in their classrooms, and to see how well they were doing. Kyle went on to say that even students who were enrolled or screened "late" seemed to be doing quite well. He then mentioned that the list of consultants that Tina had spoken to is quite impressive, and that he would recommend the Clarke School as a great resource which is "right around the corner." Kyle suggested that DSD look to the Clarke School for guidance when developing their LSL program. Tina responded that she speaks to Judy (of the Clarke School) quite frequently. Tina explained that the reason she did not list Judy as a resource in her presentation materials is because Judy also works for PPCI, and that anything Tina does on her PPCI platform automatically goes to Judy, so Tina gets Judy's advice regarding everything.

Nick then clarified for those assembled who did not know that PPCI stands for "Professional Preparation for Cochlear Implantation."

Wendy said what stuck out in her mind are the challenges that can occur when a child who is deaf is born to two parents who are also deaf. She said that Judy (of the Clarke School) informed her that the IEP team will often then make the decision regarding whether or not a child should have cochlear implants. Judy related to Wendy that, previously, parents who are deaf almost always wanted their child to be "like them" and not to have cochlear implants. Judy said that things are now changing, and that presents a new challenge for educators. The reason this is challenging is that children with cochlear implants will need even more exposure to hearing peers and spoken language, because the child is not being exposed to spoken language at home. Wendy stated that this was eye-opening information for her.

Nick noted that many people do not realize that when a child who is deaf is born to hearing parents, the child's parents often do not become proficient in sign language, which makes it more difficult for the child to learn sign language. Nick said there would be a similar situation if a child with cochlear implants were attempting to learn LSL, when both of the child's parents are deaf and communicate only using sign language. Nick concluded that when a child is attempting to communicate in a manner that is different than his or her parent's chosen style of communication, challenges will arise.

Julie then asked the sub-committee members if there were any questions for Kyle or Wendy on their presentation about their visit to the Clarke School. No questions were raised.

Julie then addressed Nick, and said that she would like to give Nick some time to go over the report that he had submitted from CHOICES regarding their thoughts on the LSL program.

Nick said that he wanted to back up a bit, and be sure that everyone present had a bit of background on what the CHOICES group is. He began by saying that the CHOICES group is made up of approximately ten individuals, ranging from people like himself who have hearing loss, to doctors, audiologists, teachers of the deaf, as well as parents of children who are deaf or have hearing loss. He stated that Thierry is a member of CHOICES as well as himself. Nick also specifically noted Dr. Taxiedo from A.I. DuPont, who does most of the cochlear implants at that hospital, and a faculty member at the University of Delaware, who is a world-renowned authority on infant language acquisition. He went on to say that this illustrates that CHOICES is a fairly diverse group of individuals. Nick informed the sub-committee members that the CHOICES group was founded approximately two years ago with all of the members having a common concern: the fact that Delaware does not have a LSL program. This is very much in contrast to what is occurring in other parts of the country. CHOICES then went on to conduct research and public inquiries regarding the lack of a LSL program in Delaware.

The research showed that there was a concern and a need for a group to advocate for a LSL program in Delaware. Nick said CHOICES first spoke with the SCPD approximately 10 months ago, and that the group consulted with audiologists and pediatric specialists over the summer of 2010. Nick stated that at a design meeting in December, when the main advisory committee and sub-committees were being planned, Tina shared her first plans for the LSL pilot classroom, and invited CHOICES to submit their comments. Nick then stated that he would not be discussing his report (which, he noted, went through three drafts) at the meeting on this particular day, but invited all present to read it carefully before the next sub-committee meeting, as it contains detailed recommendations and comments regarding the LSL pilot classroom. Nick requested "a significant chunk of time" at the next sub-committee meeting to talk in detail about some of the points mentioned in his report, as he feels they are at the heart of what the sub-committee is all about.

Julie asked the sub-committee to review the CHOICES group report, and then also directed the sub-committee's attention to Tina's comments on the CHOICES group report (a copy of which was also distributed to all present.)

At this time, Julie opened up discussion regarding the location and criteria for the LSL pilot classroom, which she said would likely take up a significant portion of time. Julie said she would also like to have some brief discussion about any thoughts about the program design itself.

Tina asked to speak at this time, and Julie opened the floor for her comments. Tina stated that during the summer (of 2010), she spoke with one of DSD's early childhood education teachers, and asked the teacher to look over her 18 years of case loads. This teacher saved notebooks from all of the families she had ever served. Over 18 years, the teacher reported, she had served 186 children. 78 of those children attended the DSD Playgroup. 68 went on to the DSD Pre-School. 44 of the children went on to be a part of the DSD K-12 program (Tina noted that this did not necessarily mean that the children stayed in the DSD School for the entire K-12 program, but that they attended the DSD K-12 program at some point in their academic career.) 61 went to district pre-schools. Five went to private pre-schools. The remainder are unknown…they either moved out of state, were home schooled, or passed away.

Tina noted that this is only one teacher, and that there are three or four more early childhood education teachers as well, but that they did not keep detailed records. She said that she is hoping to build a database of student outcomes for the future. Tina said she feels this is a very clarifying piece of information on some of the derogatory statements that have been voiced in the past regarding DSD, and about how it is perceived by some that DSD tries to "reign in" kids. Tina hypothesized that if this teacher had experienced this many positive outcomes, it would stand to reason that the other teachers would have experienced the same successes with their students.

Nick (to Tina): I'm afraid I don't understand the point you are making.

Tina then went back through the numbers and statistics she had just given again.

Nick (to Tina): I am still not understanding the point you are making. It shows they made the transition, but….

Tina (to Nick): It shows that we did not force those 186 children into our pre-school or school. It is sometimes the assumption out there that DSD tries to "reign in" kids to our programs, or tries to keep them and force bi-lingual education on them, and that is just not true. To me, this proves that we do not do that, because the numbers speak for themselves.

Nick (to Tina:) I do not want to debate on that.

Tina (to Nick:) I do not want to debate on that either.

Nick (to Tina:) The point is that we're not against DSD, and we've said that from the beginning. What we are in favor of is choices, and what we haven't had is choices up until the time our group got started. We haven't had choices, we haven't had a LSL program. If we did, we would not be here. So I don't understand what the issue is. We're also saying that there has to be intervention as early as six months old, and that there needs to be a program that is structured to do that, such as a LSL program. And we haven't had that from Delaware, is all that we're saying.

Brian (to Nick:) I think that this shows that while CHOICES didn't exist, there were still these students….Well…let's just wander right into this. This is the elephant in the room, really. And I hear this often at the department [DOE.] I get calls all the time from people who say that they feel that DSD is trying to wrangle all of these kids in. That they are going out and trying to find them, and trying to bring them to their school. And I think this shows is that this is not true about a portion of the students. If we go back in the history of DSD, that may have been. I don't know. I've only been with the [DOE] for 11 years. So I don't know what happened with DSD before my time. But I think that there has been a mistrust of DSD from some people across the state at some time, and that the mistrust still exists. And my impression of working with DSD and with Statewide Services is that they are working very hard to try to change that. And that's why the Statewide Services was created. There are more kids that are in districts than are at DSD. We've done some very basic census information. So, districts are serving kids who are hard of hearing. I'm not sure if [the districts] are serving enough of the kids, or if you want to look at more going back. I think that is why the data was shared, to show that is what DSD is trying to do. While there weren't LSL rooms previously, there were some other options for students, because they were going back to districts. Something was available for them.

Nick (to Tina and Brian:) I didn't think we were going to take this turn, but if we're going to take this turn, we're going to take this turn. There are plenty of stories that have been told from as early as 1996. If you go to the News Journal, there was an article that was published in the News Journal in 1997, there were stories that were told to me when I was doing my research in the spring of 2009, there are families that have left DSD, who said, "this is terrible. I left DSD, and I only went there because I had no choice. Nobody gave me a choice." So some of the people who left the DSD program left because they realized this was not the place for [them.] But Delaware and the [DOE] were not offering a choice. So, I didn't bring this up, but if we're going to talk about it, let's talk about it!

Julie (to all assembled:) I can tell you right now, we're not going to get all involved in that….

Nick (to Julie:) I don't want to get all involved in it! I didn't bring it up.

Julie: We are going to move forward from this.

Nick: Good!

Julie: I would like to talk about moving forward from this point.

Nick: That is what I want to talk about.

Thierry: I know you want to move on. I just want to be careful when we give numbers out there, because they don't mean anything just like that. For example, we do not know what any of the outcomes of these children who went to DSD Playgroup. Maybe 2/3 of them could've done better if they didn't go through the playgroup. I mean…I could go on and on, so I know you want to move on Julie, but I just want to be careful throwing out those numbers from the past 20 years, 25 years. We don't know how the parents made the choice, if they even had a choice, what was the outcome of the choice. So we just want to be careful, you know…we want data. If we want to debate about that, I want to be sure that we have real data. Not just, you know, numbers.

Julie: I think that this can lend itself, in moving forward, that we definitely need to work on identifying and tracking kids for data purposes, and how to best collect data to track these kids. To see outcomes, that is a clear thing, not just for deaf and hard of hearing children, but this is something that we frequently look at in early education. Data on the outcomes of students. So, I do think this is something important to look at from this point on. What are the programs these kids are going into, and what is the outcome? I don't think at this moment, any more discussion of numbers really needs to go out there.

Julie noted something that came up during the main advisory committee meeting. She said that we must look at this from the standpoint of a pilot classroom, and that it is not feasible for a family who lives in Sussex County to travel to New Castle County to attend a half day program. She said that the idea was to get a pilot program up and running, and then take what is learned in the pilot program and see what adjustments need to be made. Julie noted that Tina did address the fact that the Newark program may be difficult to access for families in lower Delaware. Julie wanted to mention this, since it is not something that had not come up for discussion in the sub-committee meeting. Nick stated that the program being located in New Castle only is one of the concerns that CHOICES brought up in their paper, and it is something he hopes can be discussed at length at the next meeting. Julie said that there can be some discussion points, and again asked everyone to please read Nick's report, so that there can be informed discussion at the next meeting.

Lou asked Julie if the Department of Education has to approve of the LSL program. Julie said that Christina School District has already gotten approval for the curriculum, and the funding to support the LSL classroom. Lou asked for clarification that the LSL pilot classroom would have to be in Christina School District, to which Julie and Tina both answered "yes." Kyle clarified that in terms of the physical location being within Christina School District (specifically, on the DSD campus,) that there were a couple of different possibilities within that campus for the location. Lou then asked, "so, the Christina School District can approve of a program like this, without the DOE saying 'go ahead'?"

Brian clarified that it is not as if DSD is creating a whole large new special program, but that it is within their purview of Statewide Services. DOE provides funding for the students, and they [Christina School District] provide programs that they think are appropriate for the students. So in a way, it's just a different kind of program, not a new school.

Tina added that the reason the LSL program is starting in Christina School District is that there is already a funding mechanism in place in Christina School District, which houses DSD. So, the money already flows, and it is easy to set this program up in Christina School District/DSD. It's going to be harder to create the program in other districts, since there is no funding mechanism in place for other districts.

Lou then said that he retracted his question, and Julie said it was a very valid question.

Julie said that many people have misconceptions, or do not understand the relationship between Christina School District and Statewide Services. She went on the say that when most people hear "Statewide Services" they think State of Delaware or DOE. However, in Delaware, it does not work this way. DSD, the Deaf-Blind Program and Delaware Autism, are actually owned by Christina School District. There are varying opinions regarding whether or not this is a positive thing.

Tina informed the sub-committee that Delaware is the only state in the nation that has a School for the Deaf that is its own entity, and that is not run under the State DOE.

Kyle re-directed the sub-committee's attention to the physical location. Julie thanked Kyle, and said this was vital to discuss. She stated that the physical location of the program would influence the impact of the program. Julie identified discussing the physical location of the program as a priority for the sub-committee to discuss.

Two physical locations for the program are being considered. DSD is currently in the process of constructing a new school, to be open for the next school year, which is one option. There is also the current DSD building, which Christina School District plans to turn into an Early Education Program after the new building is constructed. The proposed plan will have children aged three to five attending school in this building. Julie noted that having three to five year olds in the same building is something that has been implemented in the Appoquinimink School District, so she believes that may be where the idea came from.

Julie said there are pros and cons regarding the placement of the program, but that the sub-committee should work on a cohesive recommendation. She then opened the table for discussion of the location of the pilot classroom.

Tina asked for a written pro and con list to be done on a flip chart for the sub-committee members to see, and so that she could have a list of the pros and cons in note form to take

back and discuss with her colleagues. Per Tina's request, Fran started this list on a flip chart.

Wendy asked if the classroom setting in either building would be acoustically appropriate. Tina stated that the classrooms that are currently used for the preschool classrooms are already set up to be acoustically appropriate. They may not be as prime as the new location would be, and may need some tweaking, but they would be in good shape by the time the pilot program was up and running.

Kyle asked Tina if Statewide Programs serves children from birth to age three as well, to which she said yes. Tina oversees deaf and hard of hearing services for deaf and hard of hearing services for children from birth to three. Kyle asked if children from birth to three were currently being seen at DSD. Tina said no, birth to three children are served in their natural environment (usually their home or child care environment.) DSD does have an 18 month to two year old program, which they call their Play Group. Two year old programs are becoming more of the norm, but Tina said that enrolling kids before that goes against the NAEYC. Some programs are utilizing a home visit aspect, but the parents have to come in with their children if the children are younger than 18 months old.

Nick said that one factor that has been frequently discussed is the cultural aspect of DSD, and its being rooted in deaf culture. He wondered if there should be a separate environment to preserve traditional deaf culture and education. So, that is an argument against using the existing DSD building to house a LSL Program.

Conversely, Nick said, at the Clarke School, signing is not allowed. So, there is a concern here about kids who are in a LSL classroom not having access to sign language, and vice versa. So this would be an argument for using the existing building.

Fran asked for clarification on the names of the proposed locations, and asked the group to please assign the two potential sites names, which the group agreed should be "old" and "new." Julie asked if everyone understood what these names referred to, to which everyone answered yes. These terms refer to two different sites on the same campus that can be walked to. Wendy wanted to clarify at this time that the old building will be an early childhood center only.

Nick observed that one of the goals of LSL instruction is to mainstream children (possibly with supports) by kindergarten. It stands to reason that if there is a LSL classroom in an environment with traditional pre-school activities in the old building, which would lend itself well to mainstreaming the children at DSD by the time they reach kindergarten. He cited a mainstream program at the Clarke School that involves parents coming to school with their children until the children feel ready to be mainstreamed.

Fran then listed some of the Pros and Cons that had been mentioned.

<u>New Building-Pro:</u>

-Access to audiological services right there.
-Testing, molds, hearing aid and cochlear implant service available.
-When children are not making adequate gains, rather than moving to an entire new school, the child will only be moved to a new classroom.
-No minimum class size necessary in order to obtain funding through Needs Based Funding.
-DSD's own PT and OT staff can remain in place with no need for duplication in funding.
-Natural environment, once the team determines what the natural environment will be.

New Building-Con:
- May threaten the traditional deaf culture at DSD.
-LSL students would be exposed to sign language.
-Not enough mainstreaming opportunities.
-Three minute walk (outside) to the new building.
-Who is on hand to decide when a child is not making adequate gains with their cochlear implant? What if it is too soon to move the child to a new classroom? How do we ensure that children with cochlear implants are given enough time to make progress?
-In Newark only (sub-committee is in agreement that this is a whole other issue.)

Old Building-Pro:
-More natural mainstreaming opportunities.
-Audiologists can travel from the old building to troubleshoot hearing aids and cochlear implants
-Children exposed to non-hearing impaired peers.
-Natural environment, once the team determines which that will be.

Old Building Con:
-Have to have a minimum of six students to make sure that Christina School District can obtain funding through Needs Based Funding.
-DSD may have to hire additional OT and PT staff, in addition to the staff that is already on hand. This may result in a strain on Needs Based Funding due to duplication of services.
-In Newark only (sub-committee is in agreement that this is a whole other issue.)
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Thierry asked Tina to clarify what services are currently being provided in the old building, and what services that would be provided in the new building, which are not being provided now. Tina answered- troubleshooting hearing aids and cochlear implants, hearing aid programming, making molds, and testing in the booth. Tina asked Thierry to please be more specific with the questions, so that it would possibly jog her memory for all the services that are provided. Thierry said that, for example, an audiologist could easily walk to the new building to troubleshoot a hearing aid. Thierry also said he does not believe that a sound booth is needed.

Nick pointed out that parents who choose to have their children fitted with cochlear implants do so because they want their children to use LSL, not sign language. He contends that since a majority of the children in the LSL program will have "technology on their heads," it would make more sense to have a concentration of specialists near the children. Thierry told Tina that if there is a sound booth in the old building, the best thing would be to keep it there. He stated that there will be more kids in need of this kind of infrastructure than kids in the new building who use ASL. It is Thierry's opinion that if a child who is deaf also wears a hearing aid, and their primary method of instruction is sign language, then a problem with their hearing aid is not as much of an urgent concern as a child who is being instructed in LSL, and who is having trouble with their hearing aid. The child who is being instructed in sign language is not dependent upon their hearing aid to be the primary method of communication for their main modality of instruction. For the child who is being instructed in a LSL environment, a properly working hearing aid is crucial.

Tina wanted to clarify that DSD is a bi-lingual program, focusing on signacy, literacy, and oracy. She said that if there are different groups of children at DSD, which for example purposes she would refer to as "A Group," "B Group," and "C Group." A Group communicates only in sign language all day. B Group children would use sign language as their first language, but are also learning spoken English. C Group uses spoken English only. Tina said the children in B or C group may ask a teacher a question orally, and be answered orally accompanied by a sign to help imbed the answer.

Thierry said that DSD is defined as a school where ASL is the language of instruction, and that LSL students will need full access to audiological services, and that a child in a LSL class could not go a full day with a poorly functioning device. Tina mentioned that she did not know if DSD is planning to remove the booth at the old building. Julie asked Fran to put a note on the board to discuss the subject of what is being done with the old booth at a later time.

Nick emphasized to Tina that he believes that it is naïve to think that the introduction of a LSL program to DSD would not have an impact upon the student population. He said that 90% of hearing parents who have children who are deaf or hard of hearing prefer LSL as the best route for their child. Nick speculated that in 5 to 10 years, there would be a greater demand for LSL rather than sign language at DSD, and that now is the time to put the proper resources in place to ensure that DSD is prepared for that eventuality.

Brian had a question about the LSL Program being housed within the new building, which stems from the way he understands things are done at the Clarke School. Brian speculated about what would happen if the new building were the only option. He questioned if he was correct in his understanding that children being instructed in LSL could not be exposed to sign language. Brian also asked about the sound booth, stating that he is not familiar with this technology. Will the new sound booth technology be so greatly improved that students using the old sound booth will be at a disadvantage? How many times per day or per week does the average child need the sound booth?

Nick answered Brian by saying that when he attended a meeting at DSD, he very much got the impression that deaf culture is something that is greatly treasured by people who are deaf, and that an environment in which deaf culture is nurtured is extremely important to people who are deaf. He stated that not being a part of deaf culture, he would not know first hand, but that was his impression. Tina stated that Deb Trapani (a staff member at DSD) is completely deaf, and is not opposed to the LSL program being in her building at all, and that she is actually in favor of it.

Tina cited the Scranton School for Deaf, PSP, and Katzenbach as examples of schools for the deaf who have successfully integrated both sign language and LSL programs into their schools, while keeping all of the students on the same campus. She said that each school goes about it differently.

Tina and Julie then attempted to explain how Needs Based Funding works, but did not know every detail about how it works for each individual school district. Kyle asked if the sub-committee could hear from an expert on Needs Based Funding to help the sub-committee to better understand how it works, or if the sub-committee could have a written explanation of Needs Based Funding. Julie said that the sub-committee can look into that. Julie said that this is a challenge, and that Christina School District's finance department is still determining how where the LSL program is housed will affect their Needs Based Funding. As a pro for the new building in regards to funding, Tina explained that there would be no need for duplicate services if the LSL program were to be housed there, because DSD has its own PT and OT staff, which will travel to the new location. If the LSL program is housed in the old building, DSD may need to hire new OT and PT staff to serve them, which would impact their Needs Based Funding.

Kyle asked for someone to contact Christina School District, in order to arrange for them to address the sub-committee and offer more concrete answers to the Needs Based Funding question. Wendy said she believes the contact person for Christina School District is Freeman Williams.

Lou then excused himself to make a phone call, so that he could stay for the remainder of the meeting.

Thierry said the point previously mentioned as a pro for the new building, regarding moving a child not making significant gains into a new classroom, could also be viewed as a con. He questioned who would decide how much time a child would be given to achieve what is deemed significant or adequate gains. Who is going to decide how long is too long to not be making significant gains? He said he is in favor of having the program in a different building that would focus on LSL only. Tina said that Thierry is changing his mind. Thierry said this is because of the way it was initially presented to him, and that all of the classrooms should be equipped for kids to be able to listen. Tina said all of the classrooms are already equipped for kids to listen.

Julie re-emphasized that what is important here is that families be allowed to make the right choice for their child. Some families may not want LSL to be their only option.

Some may wish for their child to have an exposure to both LSL and sign language. Julie cited an example of a family who said, “no, I want my kid to sign AND speak.” Julie wants to be sure families are given every opportunity for every type of instruction. She then said that perhaps for children whose parents chose for them to be exposed to both modalities could go to, for example, a morning class that is oral-only, and an afternoon class that is sign-only.

Nick said that families will be disserved unless they understand that there needs to be intensive exposure to LSL, and that it has to be done before children lose the capability to use the part of their brain that allows them to understand LSL. Kids who don’t have that opportunity will not be well-served, Nick said, and continued by saying that LSL cannot be diluted at a young age. He emphasized the importance of not focusing on sign language when a child is trying to learn LSL.

Julie asked Nick to clarify this statement, and asked if Nick believes that families should not be given the opportunity for their child to learn both sign language and LSL.

Nick said that was not what he was saying. He re-emphasized that if a family wants their child to learn both LSL and sign language, the family should not try to teach the child both things at the same time. The time frame during which a child’s brain is able to learn how to listen is brief, and therefore LSL should be the major focus before the age of three and a half (assuming that is the parent’s wish for their child’s primary method of communication.) After that time, sign language can be introduced.

Fran asked if the sub-committee wanted to put this discussion in the parking lot list, since the meeting time was running out. Kyle and Julie agreed that there would always be differing opinions on this particular subject.

Nick and Tina then had a discussion regarding Tina’s previous statement about moving a child in a LSL classroom, who was not making adequate gains, to a sign language classroom. Tina clarified that she did not say that every child, at a particular pre-determined point in time, should be moved to a sign language classroom. She re-emphasized that it was very much to be determined on a child-by-child basis.

Fran re-directed the sub-committee’s attention to the fact that the topic on the table was *location*. Not criteria.

Brian returned to the location piece. Brian said that going on the assumption that the parents wished for their child to be instructed in LSL only, the old building would be the best way to truly restrict LSL students from the sign language students. He noted that he only mentioned separating the students because he understands from the experts on the sub-committee that both groups of children would be better served if they were separated. Brian pointed out that there would be no way for teachers and staff to know whether a child was a LSL student or a sign language student, unless the child had on a tag identifying their chosen method of communication (which would, of course, never be

done.) A teacher or staff member might inadvertently address the child in the incorrect method of communication. Brian lists this as a pro for the old building. Nick agreed.

Thierry explained the importance of not exposing children to too many different modalities within a short time frame. He explained that 90% of children who are deaf are born to hearing parents. Thierry noted that it is now more common for parents to wish for both LSL and sign language to be taught to their children. The problem with this method is that the child must be exposed for many hours at a time to one method of communication. He said, for example, that an eighteen month old child cannot be in a classroom listening for 45 minutes, then out in the hallway for five minutes where everyone is using sign language, then go back to listening for 45 minutes, and have positive results. Thierry informed the sub-committee that it takes time for children to be able to learn to be bi-lingual, and they shouldn't be overwhelmed with too many modalities right away. He went on to say that it is entirely possible for a child to eventually become bi-lingual (using LSL and sign language,) but that initially, the main mode of communication needs to be the one chosen by the child's parents. He said it would be too confusing for the children to have both LSL and sign language children in the same building. Down the road, when the children are established as being bi-lingual, it may be fine for the LSL and sign language students to be educated in the same building.

A debate on research then ensued for five minutes, which did not result in any conclusions regarding the location of the LSL program.

Following the debate on research, Lou asked for clarification on the statement that it is not conducive to learning to combine LSL and sign language students, not only for the LSL students, but for the sign language students as well. Lou asked if the sign language students might feel that their deaf culture was being threatened, and if persons with cochlear implants were a part of deaf culture. Nick emphasized that he is not a part of deaf culture. Lou said he was not implying that he was.

Lou said that he thought it would be a pro to have the kids mixed, but now he sees it is not.

Fran then re-directed everyone's attention to the fact that time was running out. She asked if there were any other burning questions before everyone moved on to the next item on the agenda.

Julie said that she would like to see families able to access information regarding all different methods of communication. For example, the family of a child without a cochlear implant being excited to attend a cochlear implant seminar, just to learn more about it. This is what Julie would like to see out of Statewide Programs, so that all parents can attend whatever workshops or seminars they would like to have more information about.

Next steps were the next items to be discussed. Many items remained in the parking lot to be discussed at the next meeting on January 28. Representative Johnson, reminded the sub-committee that the number one thing they need to discuss is Needs Based Funding. Julie said she would try to look into that and see if she could find out more herself, or if a consultant was needed.

Regarding meetings, Julie said that she is holding January 28 and February 4 as meeting dates, and that more meetings of the sub-committee may be needed after February 4. Julie opened up discussion regarding the start time of the upcoming sub-committee meetings. She stated that she felt it was important to have an early childhood education teacher on the sub-committee, and that Deb Bosso of DSD had been suggested. Deb would be unable to come to the sub-committee meetings unless they were held in the evening. After everyone consulted their schedules and found themselves to be booked and unable to re-schedule, and given the tight time frame that the sub-committee is working on, it was decided to keep the January 28 and February 4 meetings at 8:00 a.m. Tina stated that she would help Deb to find coverage for her classroom so that Deb could attend. It was decided that meetings after February 4, a different time of day could be considered, due to Deb's schedule. Lou apologized, and said he would be unable to attend the January 28 meeting, regardless of what time it was held.

Representative Johnson asked the sub-committee to determine when he and Representative Osienski would be needed to provide insight into legislative matters. Representative Osienski stated that he was happy to be at the meeting, and that it was very educational for him. Both representatives said that they would be happy to attend as many meetings as possible. Rep. Osienski pointed out that he was concerned about the students walking between the buildings, especially in poor weather conditions. Tina told him that the students would be transported via bus.

Julie said that she felt it would be premature to fold the sub-committee into the main committee just yet. She then thanked everyone for coming, and said that she felt that the meeting had been productive.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristin Mullen